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COUNSEL UPON THE READING OF BOOKS

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1968
Library
Science

BY

H. MORSE STEPHENS
AGNES REPPLIER
ARTHUR T. HADLEY
BRANDER MATTHEWS
BLISS PERRY
HAMILTON WRIGHT MABIE

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

HENRY VAN DYKE

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COUNSEL UPON THE READING OF BOOKS

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NOTE

THE six papers in this volume are based upon lectures arranged by the American Society for the Extension of University Teaching, and delivered in Philadelphia in the winter of 1898–99. The impulse to read good books that has grown out of the work of the Society in Philadelphia seemed to demand the suggestions that it was the purpose of these lectures to offer to those who desire to read wisely.

A PREFACE ON READING AND BOOKS

A PREFACE ON READING AND BOOKS

Readers existed before books were made.

The first rude writings that were cut on the faces of smooth rocks, or inscribed on tablets of clay, or traced on bits of skin, implied the presence of people in the world who were able to decipher the letters and interpret their meaning. As the number of these people increased, and as they learned to read more easily, the importance of writing as a means of instructing them or deceiving them, of enlightening their minds or affecting their feelings, of influencing them in one way or another, emerged on the surface of affairs more and more clearly: an open door to power, or to usefulness, stood before those who were ambitious to rule, or willing to serve, the inner life of mankind.

Because there were readers in the world, certain men became authors. The Book was

simply the author's invention to make his work accessible, portable, preservable, and so more powerful.

Books, then, do not exist for their own sake, but for the sake of people. A man may compose poems or construct stories for his own amusement; he may record events or describe facts for his own discipline; but when he puts these records, these verses, these inventions into a book, — clay-cylinder, papyrus roll, or printed volume, — and sends it out into the world, his mind's eye is fixed on readers, real or imaginary. He is working for them; and from them he gets his pay, — money, fame, influence, — imaginary or real.

But for the art of reading there never would have been any books. The wide diffusion of that art accounts for the immense increase in the quantity of books. The lack of direction, cultivation, and discrimination in that art accounts for the decline in the quality of books. Like readers, like authors. The great need of the world of letters is the promotion of the habit of reading with judgment, and the love of reading with taste.

This, it may be taken for granted, is a

principal object of the foundation of societies for "The Extension of University Teaching." It is not supposed by any intelligent person that courses of popular lectures can take the place of a regular and thorough academic training. But it is supposed, and with good reason, that men and women who have spent their lives among books can tell people, in a brief and simple way, something that it may be for their advantage to hear, — something about the best books and the best way to use them.

University Extension lectures serve a purpose as a sort of portico or antechamber to the library. Here the visitors are prepared to become readers. Here they are politely requested to lay aside the outer garments of prejudice and fashion, and the overshoes of bigotry, and to leave the canes and umbrellas of curiosity and irreverence behind them. Here they are told something about the arrangement of the books, and where they can find what they wish, and where they would better go to find what they need. The whole purpose of such an antechamber is corrective, incentive, preparatory. It is valuable only to the people who pass through it.

When it comes to making a book out of lectures of this kind, I must frankly confess that the enterprise has its disadvantages. It adds another volume to shelves which are already overcrowded. It necessarily loses one of the best factors in the delivery of the lectures: the personality of the speakers. However much books may do for us, living teachers, of the right kind, can always do more. So far as my own part in the volume is concerned, it has a very superfluous aspect, — a preface to an introduction, a porch to a portico.

Yet I suppose there are some advantages in the publication of such a volume. And I am sure that the proper line to be followed by the person who has to write the preface is to point out these advantages as clearly as he can.

First of all, then, it seems to me a matter of some interest to observe that the lecturers look at the subject from different sides. The difference arises not merely from the fact that each lecturer has a distinct and specific theme. It is a difference of temperament, of method, of the point of view.

Three of the six chapters in the book are

written from the scientific point of view; three are written from the literary point of view. I do not mean to say that the writers on either of these groups are out of sympathy with the writers in the other group. But I mean that they approach books in two diverse ways. The writers of the first group, Professor Stephens, President Hadley, and Professor Matthews, deal with the subject more scientifically, critically, analytically. The writers of the second group, Miss Repplier, Professor Perry, and Mr. Mabie, are inclined to value books more as works of art, and to treat them more æsthetically, vitally, sympathetically. Professor Stephens, for instance, holding a position on the extreme left, speaks of historical books principally as a means of acquiring knowledge. He warns us against imagining that a history is true because it is interesting. He objects to the intrusion of the personality of the historian into his work. He thinks little of biographies and memoirs as historical material. But Miss Repplier, holding a position on the extreme right, is very fond of biographies and memoirs just because they are so full of personality. She would have

us read them, not so much to increase and correct our knowledge of facts, as to gain a more vivid sense of human character, a more graphic picture of manners and morals.

The striking difference in point of view among writers should indicate, if my contention in regard to the influence of reading upon writing is true, an equally notable difference among readers. A little observation and reflection will convince us that such a difference actually exists. There are readers, and readers. For purposes of convenience they may be divided into three classes.

First, there is the "simple reader," — the ordinary book-consumer of commerce. He reads without any particular purpose or intention, chiefly in order to occupy his spare time. He has formed the habit and it pleases him. He does not know much about literature, but he says he knows what he likes. All is fish that comes to his net. Curiosity and fashion play a large part in directing his reading. He is an easy prey for the loud advertising bookseller. He seldom reads a book the second time, except when he forgets that he has read it before. For a reader in this stage of evo-

lution the most valuable advice (if, indeed, any counsel may be effectual) is chiefly of a negative character. Do not read vulgar books, silly books, morbid books. Do not read books that are written in bad English. Do not read books simply because other people are reading them. Do not read more than five new books to one old one.

Next comes the "intelligent reader," — the person who wants to know, and to whom books are valuable chiefly for the accuracy of the information which they convey. He reads with the definite purpose of increasing his acquaintance with facts. Memory is his most valuable faculty. He is ardent in the following of certain lines of investigation; he is apt to have a specialty, and to think highly of its importance. He is inclined to take notes and to make analyses. This particular reader is the one to whom lists of books and courses of reading are most useful. Miss Repplier makes light of them as "Cook's Tours in Literature," but the reader whose main interest is the increase of knowledge is often very glad to be "personally conducted" through a new region of books.

Last comes the "gentle reader" — the person who wants to grow, and who turns to books as a means of purifying his tastes, deepening his feelings, broadening his sympathies, and enhancing his joy in life. Literature he loves because it is the most humane of the arts. Its forms and processes interest him as expressions of the human striving towards clearness of thought, purity of emotion, and harmony of action with the ideal. The culture of a finer, fuller manhood is what this reader seeks. He is looking for the books in which the inner meanings of nature and life are translated into language of distinction and charm, touched with the human personality of the author, and embodied in forms of permanent interest and power. This is literature. And the reader who sets his affections on these things enters the world of books as one made free of a city of wonders, a garden of fair delights. He reads not from a sense of duty, not from a constraint of fashion, not from an ambition of learning, but from a thirst of pleasure; because he feels that pleasure of the highest kind, — a real joy in the perception of things lucid, luminous, symmetrical, musical, sincere,

passionate, and profound, — such pleasure restores the heart and quickens it, makes it stronger to endure the ills of life and more fertile in all good fruits of cheerfulness, courage, and love. This reader for vital pleasure has less need of maps and directories, rules and instructions, than of companionship. A criticism that will go with him in his reading, and open up new meaning in familiar things, and touch the secrets of beauty and power, and reveal the hidden relations of literature to life, and help him to see the reasonableness of every true grace of style, the sincerity of every real force of passion, — a criticism that penetrates, illuminates, and appreciates, making the eyes clearer and the heart more sensitive to perceive the living spirit in good books, — that is the companionship which will be most helpful, and most grateful to the gentle reader.

Why, then, should we be amazed or troubled by the contrast in point of view among the writers of this volume? It is simply a correspondence or a concession to a diversity among readers. It is the result of an inevitable law, a clear evidence of design

in nature, a kind provision of Providence, an adaptation of the supply to the demand even in University Extension literature. Whichever class of readers we may belong to (and I, for one, decline to commit myself) we can all find something here to please and profit us. The intelligent (but not ungentle) reader can enjoy the wise instruction of Professors Stephens, Hadley, and Matthews. The gentle (but not unintelligent) reader can delight in the suggestive interpretations of Miss Repplier, Professor Perry and Mr. Mabie. All can unite in prayers for the simple reader, that he may not spend his last dollar for the 435,999th copy of the newest popular book, but expend his money more wisely in the purchase of —

What? Here is a real difficulty. And here also is the second point of interest that strikes me in this collection of lectures. The lecturers differ not only in their point of view, but also in their judgment of particular books and authors. And this second difference runs through the groups and splits them up. For example, Professor Matthews speaks scornfully of the historical novel as a "bastard hybrid of fact and fancy." But Profes-

sor Stephens values it highly and commends it strongly. He makes light, however, of the philosophy of history. But President Hadley praises it and counsels us to read the philosophical historians.

Such variety of opinions among guides and instructors seems to me a most cheerful and encouraging fact. Doubtless each one of these learned judges has a good reason to give for his preferences. Doubtless there are treasures to be found in various regions of literature, — not a solitary pot of gold hidden in a single field, and a terrible chance that we may not happen to buy the right lot, — but veins of rich ore running through all the rocks, and placers in all the gravel beds. Doubtless we may follow any one of a half dozen roads and not go far astray after all.

Let us not take our reading too anxiously, too strenuously. There are more than a hundred good books in the world. The best hundred for you may not be the best hundred for me. We ought to be satisfied if we get something thoroughly good, even though it be not absolutely and unquestionably the best in the world. The habit of worrying

about the books that we have not read destroys the pleasure and diminishes the profit of those that we are reading. Be serious, earnest, sincere in your choice of books, and then put your trust in Providence and read with an easy mind.

Any author who has kept the affection, interest and confidence of thoughtful, honest readers through at least one generation is fairly sure to have something in him that is worth reading.

Let us keep out of provincialism in literature, — even that which comes from Athens.

You like Tolstoi and George Eliot; I like Scott and Thackeray. You like Byron and Shelley; I like Wordsworth and Tennyson. You admire the method of Stubbs and Seignobos; I still find pleasure in Macaulay and Carlyle. Well, probably neither of us is altogether wasting time. Jordan is a good river. But there is also plenty of water in the streams of Abana and Pharpar.

There is a large number of courses of reading that any one of us might take with profit. It is foolish to stand too long hesitating at the cross-roads. Choose your course with open eyes and follow it with a cheerful

heart. And take with you a few plain maxims drawn from experience.

Read the preface first. It was probably written last. But the author put it at the beginning because he wanted to say something particular to you before you entered the book. Go in through the front door.

Read plenty of books about people and things, but not too many books about books. Literature is not to be taken in emulsion. The only way to know a great author is to read his works for yourself. That will give you knowledge at first-hand.

Read one book at a time, but never one book alone. Well-born books always have relatives. Follow them up. Learn something about the family if you want to understand the individual. If you have been reading the "Idylls of the King" go back to Sir Thomas Malory: if you have been keeping company with Stevenson, travel for a while with Scott, Dumas, and Defoe.

Read the old books, — those that have stood the test of time. Read them slowly, carefully, thoroughly. They will help you to discriminate among the new ones.

Read no book with which the author has

not taken pains enough to write it in a clean, sound, lucid style. Life is short. If he thought so little of his work that he left it in the rough, it is not likely to be worth your pains in reading it.

Read over again the ten best books that you have already read. The result of this experiment will test your taste, measure your advance, and fit you for progress in the art of reading.

HISTORY

REFERENCES

There is no adequate history of historiography.

The only book which gives a satisfactory account of the modern conception of History and of the scientific method of historical research is C. V. Langlois' and C. Seignobos' "Introduction to the Study of History," translated by G. G. Berry, New York, 1898.

For the older conception of History see Macaulay, "Essay on History," first published in the "Edinburgh Review," May, 1828, and reprinted in all editions of his Essays. His attitude is shown by the remarks — "History begins in novel and ends in essay." "History is a compound of poetry and philosophy." "Facts are the mere dross of History."

"The Methods of Historical Study," and "The Unity of History," by E. A. Freeman, are stimulating works, but too vague to be of great value.

The chief opponent of the modern conception of History is Frederic Harrison, whose criticisms have been collected in his "The Meaning of History," except the latest, which appeared in the issues of "The Nineteenth Century" for September and November, 1898.

HISTORY

A SERIES of lectures on "Books and Reading" would be incomplete without a lecture upon History, for History is still often regarded simply as a branch of literature. The great changes in the aims of the historian, which have taken his work out of the realms of poetry, fiction, and philosophy, and the great changes in the methods of the historian, wrought by the adoption of the methods of scientific investigation, are recognized indeed within a limited circle of readers, but are still unknown even to a majority of educated persons. There are still many readers who regard impartiality of statement and diligence in investigation as of less importance in a professed historical work than elegance of style or novelty of statement, and who allow themselves to be confused into believing the statements of writers of the pre-scientific period because their works bear the title of histories. They do not dis-

tinguish between the famous histories, which are great monuments of literature but not faithful accounts of what happened in the past, and the works of modern historians, who describe with more accurate perspective and more detailed knowledge the actual course of events. They regard the works of Thomas Carlyle, for instance, as containing a true account of historical happenings instead of the suggestive and eloquent comments of a great thinker upon historical matters. Bad history is often good literature, and educated men will ever continue to read and to admire the great works of literature which are styled histories, but it is time that they should read them as literature and not as books supposed to contain historical information. I propose in this lecture to examine the modern school of historical writing, and to point out in what ways the modern conception of history differs from that held in past days, and what is meant by scientific investigation in historical matters, with the idea of aiding readers to understand when they study books labeled history, whether they are likely to obtain from them accurate historical information

or pleasant food for thought or imagination. It is not necessarily the great man of letters or the great thinker who writes the best history; and the reverse of this statement obviously follows, that it is not necessarily the great historian who produces the best literary or philosophical works on historical subjects.

The connection between history and literature is as old as history and as old as literature, since history is the narration of the events of the past and literature is the written expression of ideas. The earliest form of history and the earliest form of literature is to be found in the great epic poems, whether worked up or not from tribal songs or folk traditions, which express the earliest national consciousness of all races which have played a part in this world, whether they be the Greeks in the Homeric poems, or the Norsemen in the Edda, or the people of Hindustan in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Whatever may be the amount of historic truth, overlaid with mythology and exaggerated by childish imagination, which is embalmed in the primitive epics, it is the fact that these poems pretend at least to deal, despite the inter-

vention of gods and demons, with the actual affairs of men, that gives them their place as the earliest forms of historical composition. When the practice of writing led to the discarding of the poetic form and the use of prose, most races continued to give their early prose histories the same imaginative and mythological complexion that their primitive poems had worn. It was so with the Norsemen in the Sagas and with the Hindus; but in the literature of that most gifted race which has given to the Western world its conceptions of literature as well as of art, a change of attitude is to be observed when the prose composition of history came into vogue. When Herodotus, the Father of History, read his famous work to the Hellenic assemblage at the Olympian games, it was found that he had taken as his subject the tale of the great struggle between East and West, between Europe and Asia, between the Greeks and the Persian Empire.

Credulous as Herodotus shows himself in his description of the Oriental world which had failed to crush the Greeks, and naïvely as he relates deeds of superhuman character, there is yet a wide difference between

the mixture of mythology and history in the Homeric poems and the coherent treatment of a great crisis in the history of Herodotus. But the flavor of the poetic age continued, and Herodotus was clearly not so much concerned with narrating truly the events of the struggle he described as with exalting the importance of the achievements of the Greeks. Thucydides, next in order, the great Athenian historian, in his story of the Peloponnesian War was more impressed with the idea of explaining than simply narrating, and with him narration of what really happened was not so much the supreme aim as the explanation of why things happened as they did. It is worthy of note that while the annalists' dry statements of facts as they happened perished, the works of Herodotus and Thucydides, as great works of literature, survived. It was not so much the actual knowledge of how things happened that appealed to the cultured Greeks as the exaltation of race pride in the pages of Herodotus and the philosophical explanation of Sparta's triumph and Athens' failure in the pages of Thucydides. Events had to be narrated in set literary form, not for their

own sake, but with some ulterior end in view, to satisfy the Greek conception of history, and the Muse of History, Clio, took her place with the other Muses as standing for a form of artistic creation. Aristotle, greatest of the Greeks, when he undertook to expound political ideas, appealed to history for his illustrations, and showed throughout the "Politics" some knowledge of the constitutions of both Greek and non-Greek states; but his references display a readiness to accept the traditional accounts without examining their accuracy, and he evidently regarded his historical illustrations as subsidiary to his political conclusions. Plutarch in his "Lives" did not pretend to write history; yet it is worth noting that neither did he pretend to write biography, in the sense of giving a true account of the lives of his heroes, but that he wrote studies of great men's lives in order to inspire respect and admiration for certain ethical virtues in the minds of his readers.

As soon as Roman literature developed, the sweeping influence of Greek ideas showed itself upon the Latin writers. But a new contribution of great significance was

made to these ideas. History was written by the Latin historians not so much for the promotion of racial pride, or even for the illustration of political or ethical principles, as for the stimulation of national patriotism. Herodotus, indeed, made the climax of his history the successful struggle of Hellenic against Asiatic civilization; but Herodotus could not realize the national idea, because the Greek patriotism of the city state was not the Roman patriotism. The first great Latin historian, whose works have in part descended to us, Livy, did not attempt to demonstrate principles, but endeavored to inculcate in his history the pride of national patriotism. He cared not about the truth with regard to the past; the study of annals was as distasteful to him as to a modern philosophical historian; it was his joy rather to incorporate all the legends and traditions, whether of gods or demi-gods, heroes or men, that served to make more majestic the grand story of Roman development. The same idea inspired Livy that inspired Virgil; just as the Æneid with its pretension to base the origin of Rome upon the most famous legends of the Hellenic world is the distinc-

tively Roman epic, in prose the decades of Livy catered to the same pride of national patriotism. In style Livy is as frankly imaginative as Herodotus and Thucydides, and these are the masters whom he follows in the speeches that he puts into the mouths of his characters and in the subordination of facts to a preconceived idea. The other great Latin historian, part of whose works have descended to us, Tacitus, is as frankly indifferent to the discovery and narration of the truth as the more credulous Livy. His task resembled that of Thucydides in that he dealt with a period which was too recent or too contemporary to admit of the legendary tales that Livy loved. But the bias of Tacitus is evident through all his works; his account of the reign of Tiberius is the work of a clever pamphleteer, even if there existed a basis of fact to go upon, and his slighter works, like the "Agricola" and the "Germania," exhibit the skill of the master of rhetorical style rather than the impartiality of the seeker after truth. With the Latin historians, then, as with their great prototypes, the Greek historians, the narration of the course of events as they occurred

is subordinated to other aims, and their famous productions are to modern criticism models of literature rather than models of history.

Since the great writers of classical antiquity regarded history as something to be written with an ulterior end in view, whether political or ethical or patriotic, and not as something to be studied for its own sake, they despised the annalists of their time very much as the philosophical writers of the last century despised the "mere antiquarians." The ancient world agreed with them, as the literary critics of the last three centuries agreed about the uselessness of the antiquarian. This is clearly shown by the fact that whereas the works of Herodotus and Thucydides and much of those of Livy and Tacitus have come down to us, we know little more than the names of the industrious annalists who year by year recorded events as they occurred. True it is that the annalists were no more historians than the antiquarians, but at least they preserved the materials of history which the more eloquent writers embodied in their books. We may be grateful to literature in that their literary fame has

preserved for us the writings of the most famous historians of antiquity, containing, despite their historical shortcomings and colored renderings, some part of the truth; but what would not the world give now for the more authentic, if less literary, productions of the humbler recorders of contemporary facts?

It has seemed worth while to dwell upon the characteristics of the classical idea of history, in order to show the nature of the conception of the historian's duty which became current when the revival of classical learning and the invention of printing brought into being modern literature. The classical idea was diametrically opposed to the modern idea of simply narrating what happened in the past, in its ever keeping a national, political, or ethical end in view; and it was not until the present century that the Western world abandoned the theory that the history of the past deserved to be told only for the lessons it might convey instead of for its own sake. During the Middle Ages and until the Revival of Learning brought the great models of antiquity before the minds of scholars, to the exclusion of all other models,

the classical conception of history diminished in force, and in the Western Empire the history of historiography was influenced rather by traditions of the classical conception than by a knowledge of its actual productions. In the Byzantine Empire, indeed, writers like Procopius and the Princess Anna Comnena wrote with a knowledge of the classical models, but with an exaggeration of their characteristic faults. Gibbon has done full justice to the Byzantine historians, and there is no need here to dwell upon their merits or their deficiencies, since they did not affect either the development of history in the Western Europe of the Middle Ages or the classical ideal which revived with the study of classical literature. Very few of the mediæval chroniclers of Western Europe were much more than annalists, who jotted down from day to day the events which occurred in the immediate neighborhood of their monasteries or of which rumors reached them from more distant places. But even during the darkest ages, while the annalists were collecting the scanty material for the history of their times, there were some few chroniclers who conceived a larger view and who

attempted to write history and not merely to compile annals or materials for history. When these chroniclers, who tried to be historians, studied the past, they studied it, however, whether consciously or not, with very much the old classical ideas, only modified by the introduction of a new aim, the justification of the Christian religion. The idea of proving, and of twisting the facts of history to prove, the truths of the Christian religion was both natural and tempting to professional men of religion like the monkish chroniclers. National pride suggested much of the treatment of the past at the hands of those mediæval chroniclers who tried to write history instead of annals, or as an introduction to their collection of annals, but religious zeal and a desire to promote the interests of the Church influenced them to an even greater degree. It would take too long to deal at length with the different ages and types of mediæval historians, and it would perhaps be more profitable to lay weight only upon three writers, celebrated among early English chroniclers, whose work stands out distinctly and illustrates the development of the historical idea in the Middle Ages from the seventh to the twelfth century.

The most illustrious man of letters of the Anglo-Saxon period of English literature was the Northumbrian monk who is always known as the Venerable Bede. Now Bede was more essentially a theologian than he was a man of letters. The greatest part of his literary work was theological, and it was with the idea of exalting the services rendered by the Christian religion to the people of England that he undertook his historical work. He called his history "The Ecclesiastical History of the English People," and its title clearly explains his aim. Bede did not desire to set before his readers an accurate account of the history of England, but he wrote rather to lay weight upon the mercies that had come to the island through the introduction of Christianity. To Bede the great fact of English history was the conversion of the people of the different kingdoms to Christianity, and he dwelt upon the work of evangelization and the difficulties it overcame with the fervor of enthusiasm. It is true that Bede includes a good deal of secular history in his narrative, but its proportions are influenced by his special intention. It may be remarked, however, that Bede took

much more pains than most of the mediæval writers of his time to acquire accurate information. At the beginning of his history he mentions his authorities and the character of the information he obtained from each of them, and he evidently took pains to weigh his authorities and to check their statements by critical comparison. Nearly five centuries elapsed between the time of Bede and the time of Geoffrey of Monmouth, yet until the time of Geoffrey it cannot be said that any of the English recorders of events can be regarded as historians rather than annalists. Geoffrey's idea was to aggrandize the people of England by dwelling upon their antiquity and making their historical past very distant indeed. Just as the Rajput bards in India try to increase the glory of their princes by tracing their genealogy to the sun and moon, and giving a long mythical ancestry as an introduction to the recorded deeds of ancestral heroes, so Geoffrey of Monmouth tried to make England as ancient and as classical as possible by deriving the word Britain from Brut and narrating that the English state was founded by an exile from Troy. Thus he brought his country into touch with the

great struggle of which Homer sung, and by adopting an imaginative genealogy attempted to assert the importance of England in classical times. The Irish chroniclers were just as imaginative and just as desirous of asserting a classical origin for their people, but they preferred to derive their heroes from Miletus rather than from Troy. But the importance of Geoffrey of Monmouth rests even more upon his adoption of Celtic legends into his early English history. The source of his imaginations is a vexed subject among specialists, but it is certainly to him that the English people owe the incorporation among their national legends of the tales of Arthur and the prophecies of Merlin. Geoffrey was moved, in putting together a mythical history of early Britain, by a frank desire to extend the antiquity of the people of England and thus to promote their national pride. It mattered not to him whether the legends he incorporated were classical or Celtic; it mattered not, though he was a Christian bishop, how much he adopted of pagan mythologies; least of all did the question of probability or veracity occur to his mind; his sole purpose was to stimulate

national pride, and the influence of his work is to be seen in the enduring popularity of his legends in England throughout the later Middle Ages. William of Malmesbury, a contemporary with Geoffrey of Monmouth, did not attempt such entirely imaginative methods, and neither invented nor adapted an Arthur nor traced the origin of the people of England to prehistoric Trojan exiles; but he did try to fit English history into universal history, and, by dwelling upon this feature, to exalt the place England should hold in the history of the world. He too, as an ecclesiastic, laid special weight upon the ecclesiastical side of English history, and never forgot to glorify the work of the Church in England. These three famous mediæval historians of England were indeed distinguished from the annalists in that they attempted to make a continuous story and to group their matter with some sense of perspective, but none of them was so much concerned with the discovery of the truth as with the illustration of the thesis he had set before himself. Their methods and aims were typical of their time, and they are to be distinguished from the compilers of annals,

like the writers of the Anglo-Saxon or English Chronicle, and the recorders of contemporary history, like Roger of Hoveden.

The writings of Bede, Geoffrey of Monmouth, and William of Malmesbury, like those of all the mediæval chroniclers in the countries of Western Europe, were in Latin, and showed sometimes in the conception of history and still more often in their style the influence of classical traditions and classical models. It is true enough that accurate knowledge of the great Latin writers became impossible as knowledge of the classics waned, and that Virgil, for instance, became known rather as a magician than as a poet; but their tradition remained and had its effect upon the more literary chroniclers of the Middle Ages. It is interesting to see, side by side with the elaboration of the mediæval chronicles, a development of history in the vernaculars, and to observe how with the growth of vernacular literature in Western Europe came a repetition of the development of Greek historical literature, although with a significant difference. Just as the Homeric poems represented the legendary achievements of early Greek heroes, so does the "Chanson

de Roland" embody in splendid verse the traditions of the great age of Charlemagne and glorify the deeds of its heroes. Fortunately the "Chanson de Roland" does not stand alone as the sole representative of its class, like the Homeric poems, but it may be regarded as a typical poem of historical tradition as much as the Iliad, and its scheme of narration, allowing for the spirit of the civilization of its era, is not strikingly different. If the "Chanson de Roland" may be taken as illustrating the beginnings of history as epic poetry in the modern European vernaculars, so may Froissart be picked out as illustrating the transference of history from the verse to the prose form. It would be perhaps too much to compare Froissart and his contemporaries who wrote in the fourteenth century to Herodotus and Thucydides, but in the history of historiography they occupy a similar place. The introduction of Christianity had profoundly modified the character of civilized man and caused a change of mental attitude in dealing with the delights of war, which can be clearly seen in comparing the Iliad with the "Chanson de Roland." Out of this changed

attitude grew chivalry, and Froissart's "Chronicles" are not only prose accounts of events, but the exhibition in the narration of those events of the characteristics of chivalry. Froissart no more writes with the sole idea of narrating the events of the past than did Herodotus or Geoffrey of Monmouth; his eyes are fixed upon the deeds of doughty knights, and neither popular movements, like the Peasants' Revolt in England, nor the working out of royal or national policy, distract his attention from the record of feasts and battles and campaigns. Froissart may be taken as the typical chronicler of the age of chivalry, and had it not been for the great movement known as the Revival of Learning, the writing of history in Western Europe would undoubtedly have progressed in regular development from the mediæval chronicles in Latin and the romantic chronicles in the vernaculars into some recognized and perhaps novel form of historical composition.

The Revival of Learning gave to the Western world actual knowledge of what had been considered in ancient times the models of historical writing, and at once put an end to the prospect of any natural development

from the chronicles. Stimulated by the beauty of style of these classical models, the historians of the period of the Revival of Learning deliberately modeled their works upon them. Machiavelli not only wrote his "History of Florence" under such influence, but summarized his ideas upon politics in "Discourses upon Livy." João de Barros, the greatest of all the Portuguese historians, deliberately wrote his history of the Portuguese in Asia in the form of decades, and interspersed his narrative of events with imaginary speeches addressed by Portuguese generals to their armies of the same character that Thucydides and Livy delighted to compose. The learned De Thou preferred to call himself Thuanus, and even abandoning the vernacular French, to write, in the correct but stilted Latin of the Renaissance, a history of his own times which he believed would be valued by posterity on account of its excellent echo of Livy's language and literary style. And if we turn to the writing of history in England, it may be noted that the learned Hobbes, the philosopher of Malmesbury, wrote his "Behemoth, or the History of the Civil Wars of England" in

direct imitation of Thucydides' "History of the Peloponnesian War." But it was not only the style and form of the classical models which was adopted by the writers of Western Europe; they absorbed also the classical conception of history. In their eyes the historian differed from the annalist in that it was his duty not only to write in a more elegant style, but likewise to point political or ethical lessons or to twist events for the gratification of national pride. In time, and more particularly in the eighteenth century, writers appeared who prided themselves in bringing together the various political lessons they discovered in the works of accredited historians, and in founding upon wide generalizations what they were pleased to call the philosophy of history. It never concerned these philosophers that the historians upon whose works they based their theories had themselves selected and grouped their facts to illustrate theories, and that all their history rested upon so insecure a foundation in no way affected their sapient philosophy. Never has the study of history fallen so low as in the eighteenth century, when writers were deemed historians from

the excellence of their style or the crudity of their theories, and when diligence in investigation and impartial accuracy of statement were assumed to be the characteristics of plodding Dryasdusts, quite unworthy of the serious consideration of men of light and leading.

It was however in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, when history in its modern sense was at its lowest ebb, that there labored modest scholars who collected the records of the past and thereby conferred an inestimable service upon the generations that were to come. The men who rendered the greatest service to the study of history during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were not the men who wrote philosophical history, but the great collectors and editors of documents, men like Muratori in Italy, Hearne and Twysden in England, and the famous Benedictines in France. They might be despised by the superior persons who wrote history, but in return they too despised the inaccurate generalizations of their esteemed contemporaries. The unhappy distinction between the business of the scholar or antiquarian who studied and made accessible the documents

of the past and the philosophical writer who assumed the name of historian is largely responsible for the current misunderstanding of the aim and methods of the modern historical student. It is still sometimes considered that the historian's title is earned only by a brilliant presentation of the past, and that the more patient scholar should be classed as an archæologist or an antiquarian or a mere editor of documents. But it is worth noting that whereas the vast collections of the great antiquarians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries form an indispensable basis for the work of students of history of to-day, the books of the philosophical historians of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries are read only as masterpieces of literary style. Their volumes are no longer consulted by seekers after a knowledge of the past; their theories are of interest only to students of political philosophy, their faulty arrangement of their material, their want of accuracy, their sacrifice of truth to style, their willful carelessness, and their bias has utterly condemned their works as repertories of historical information.

There is but one marked exception, to my

knowledge, in the whole literature of the eighteenth century, that is to say, there is but one writer who was regarded as a historian in the eighteenth century whose works are still read as history and not as literature at the present time. That exception is Edward Gibbon. And it is worthy of notice that Gibbon used the methods of the modern scientific school long before those methods were understood or formulated in Europe. Gibbon realized that there was no gulf of difference between the historian and the antiquary; Gibbon used his authorities as far as possible in their original form; Gibbon did not overweigh accuracy of statement by embellishments of style; Gibbon attacked his subject without laboring to prove a thesis or justify a theory; and Gibbon therefore stands alone as the one historian of the eighteenth century whose work is regarded to-day as history that deserves reading for the accurate historical information it contains. Few things are more interesting in the whole history of historiography than some of the remarks that Gibbon makes in the prefaces to his different editions of his "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," because in them Gibbon

shows how differently he conceived the duty of a historian from such other eighteenth-century writers as Voltaire or Hume or Robertson. "Diligence," writes Gibbon in 1776, in his advertisement to the notes of the first edition of his famous history, — "diligence and accuracy are the only merits which an historical writer may ascribe to himself; if any merit, indeed, can be assumed from the performance of an indispensable duty. I may therefore be allowed to say that I have carefully examined all the original materials that could illustrate the subject which I had undertaken to treat." Further, in 1788 Gibbon writes in his preface to the fourth volume of the quarto edition of his history, "I shall content myself with renewing my serious protestation, that I have always endeavored to draw from the fountain-head; that my curiosity, as well as a sense of duty, has always urged me to study the originals; and that, if they have sometimes eluded my search, I have carefully marked the secondary evidence, on whose faith a passage or a fact were reduced to depend." No modern student could state more clearly the chief obligations of the historian than Gibbon has done in these

sentences, and it is equally remarkable that, when he set down in a famous passage the circumstances under which the thought came to him of writing his *magnum opus*, in his omission to dwell upon any motive for his work, except the interest which his subject inspired, Gibbon also foreshadowed the attitude of the historian of to-day.

It was not until the present century that the idea of selecting a subject for research and narration for its own inherent interest, and the method of investigation which Gibbon had indicated, were regularly formulated and became the dogma and the practice of a new school of historical writers. It might be possible to show that others than Gibbon, especially among the editors of documents, had even before his time held the views and practiced the methods of modern historians, but it is the glory of Niebuhr and Ranke that they not only formulated these ideas and put them into practice but that they founded the school which may be called the modern scientific school of history. The student of historiography can indeed point out instances of the exhibition of similar ideas and methods among the scholars and writers of other

countries, but it was in Germany that they first became an educational, literary, and scientific force; and the phrase, the German school of historians, is not historically misleading, although many of the most conspicuous champions of that school were not themselves trained in Germany or consciously influenced by German example. The first great name of the German school is that of Niebuhr. It was the dream of Niebuhr's life to write a history of Rome which should end where Gibbon began. His task was to remain unaccomplished, and he never got further than to the Punic Wars. But in dealing with the early period of Roman history he rendered a greater service to the study of history than Gibbon had rendered. Until the time of Niebuhr it had been the habit to consider Livy a veritable historian, and the tales recorded by Livy for the greater honor and glory of Rome were repeated and rehashed by later writers with much elegance of prose style, but without critical examination. The protests of the few scholars of the Renaissance who had perceived the improbability of the traditional early history of Rome had been scornfully disregarded, and the accepted

writers of ancient history during the eighteenth century, such as Rollin in France and Hooke in England, had considered writing a history of Rome to mean paraphrasing Livy with an occasional addition from Plutarch and Dio Cassius. Niebuhr saw the absurdity of this, and in his Roman history he not only rejected the fables of Livy but showed why they were to be rejected. It was this that made Niebuhr the real founder of the modern scientific school of historians. Others, since his time, with a fuller knowledge of documents than was possible for him to possess, have written better histories of Rome, but Niebuhr's fame rests upon the fact of his critical examination of traditional history. Niebuhr showed the way; but Ranke applied the critical methods of Niebuhr to wider fields, and trained students in the modern idea that it was the duty of the historian to study history for the purpose of discovering how things actually happened and not for the purpose of bolstering up any theory, however noble, whether national or ethical or political. The service that Niebuhr and Ranke rendered was twofold; on the one hand they showed that truth should be the

aim of the historian's quest; on the other hand they showed that in that quest he must diligently hunt out all possible material and afterwards appreciate that material with trained and critical faculties. It is most possible that the work of Niebuhr and Ranke in taking history out of the domain of philosophy and literature, and in regarding it from a critical point of view, was influenced by the analogy in the advances made toward new truths in the mathematical, experimental, and natural sciences, both in method and in aim. The enormous strides made in the study of these sciences after the adoption of modern methods, and the great discoveries effected by drawing conclusions from known and recorded phenomena and experiments, certainly influenced workers in the field of history, and although Niebuhr and Ranke might have founded their school without any direct imitation of their fellow workers in these sciences, it is yet significant that scientific methods of investigation and the conviction that truth should be sought for its own sake found their fullest development in Germany, when these two great masters of historical investigation flourished.

The modern conception of history differs entirely from that of the great writers of classical antiquity, whose influence and example affected the writing of history down to the present century. It demands that the historian should present an accurate and impartial account of man's doings in the past. Before he can give such an accurate and impartial narrative it is obviously his first duty to discover the truth as to what has happened in the past. The discovery of the truth and its narration form, therefore, his one and only aim.

The natural limitations of the historian are great. Every human man is inevitably influenced by the circumstances that surround him. No Englishman could write the history of England with absolute impartiality; no Frenchman could write the history of France with absolute impartiality; no German could write the history of Germany with absolute impartiality; and no American could write the history of the United States with absolute impartiality. Still less could any Frenchman write a history of England with absolute impartiality; for the prejudice of national repulsion may be as

great as that of national affection. Nor is nationality the only natural limitation. Religious considerations, political beliefs, and class impressions must affect the impartiality of every human man. Since these natural limitations are so great it seems a truism to state that the historian should not further limit his efforts at impartiality by the cultivation of artificial limitations. If a writer deliberately writes history, as the practice of the historians of the past demanded, with the desire to stimulate national pride, or to justify some political idea or political party, or to defend some religious view, or to illustrate some philosophical theory, he simply adds artificial limitations to those inevitable natural limitations which have been enumerated. The modern conception of history then demands that artificial limitations shall not be added to natural limitations in studying and writing history. The absolute truth with regard to the past can never be discovered or narrated by human men, owing to the natural prejudices of environment, apart from the impossibility of obtaining complete information; but at least an honest attempt should be made to approximate to

the truth, and this is what the modern conception of history demands. Even when dealing with long past ages man's infirmity of natural prejudice inevitably intervenes. A modern investigator of Greek history, for instance, cannot avoid taking sides or feeling sympathy with Athens or with Sparta; the study of early Christian heresies has envenomed many a writer nearly two thousand years after the heresies were propounded; Mr. Freeman loves Harold and feels aspersions on Harold's character to be reflections on English character, as much as Thierry rejoices in the Norman Conquest as a victory of France over perfidious Albion; and the mere fact that some particular subject has been selected by a student for investigation is a proof that that particular subject has attracted his interest and therefore necessarily attracted it for some reason, which is likely to bias his investigations and narration.

But the modern conception of history is not the only distinction which marks the change between the historians of classical antiquity and the historians of to-day. If Niebuhr and Ranke and the other great

German teachers formulated this clearly, they also even more clearly propounded the idea of the scientific method of investigation into the facts of the past. Here again the analogy of the study of the mathematical, experimental, and natural sciences can be perceived. Just as in these sciences the chief work that has to be done is observation or experiment, since from observations and experiments alone conclusions can be drawn; so also in historical work the first duty of the worker is careful investigation before a presentation may be made of results. The scientific method of investigation demands first of all diligence in discovering and examining all possible material, and secondly trained critical faculty in dealing with the material that has been discovered and examined. MM. Langlois and Seignobos in their valuable "Introduction to the Study of History" have dealt with the preliminary steps towards learning how to discover all possible material upon a subject with which the historical student has decided to deal. Enormous and bewildering as the task of research is, it is yet the indispensable preliminary to doing any useful work, and one of

the chief causes of despair to the historical writer of to-day lies in the knowledge of the fact that, however diligent he may have been, some new bit of material, overlooked or newly discovered, may at any moment upset the result of his most strenuous labor. But it is not enough to examine all possible material; the historian must further be trained to examine it with critical acumen. The critical faculty cannot indeed be taught, but no more can it be instinctively assumed. The laws of evidence have to be taught to the historical student as they have to be taught to the lawyer. No rules and formulæ can ever entirely take the place of critical aptitude, but they indicate the attitude of mind to be adopted in the examination of material. Historical material is vastly diverse, so vastly diverse that material seems a better word to use than document, which conveys the impression that printed, written, or inscribed materials alone are useful as traces of the past, from which to derive information. A battlefield, a coin, or a city wall is as much historical material as a printed newspaper, or a mediæval charter, or a Babylonian brick, for everything is

historical material which bears upon it a trace of the past, and in constructing the history of the past it is necessary to examine and to weigh all the traces of the past that can possibly be brought under examination.

This recognition of the extent and diversity of historical material has, since the scientific method of investigation has come into being, revolutionized the attitude of the historical student towards his material. Time was, even after the birth of the new spirit, when it was considered enough to study the written or printed material upon a subject or period, when the student of ancient history thought it sufficient to base his work upon a critical examination of Thucydides and Tacitus and the other classic authors, checking their statements by a critical examination of their bias, methods, and sources, and correcting their statements by a knowledge of such inscriptions as might have been transcribed and deciphered. Time was when the student of the history of the Middle Ages thought his work done when he had carefully compared the accounts given by the chroniclers of what they had seen, and of what they had heard had occurred in

different parts of the world, checking their reports by the construction of a good text of the chronicles in question and a critical examination of the sources of the writers' information. Time was when the working over of contemporary memoirs was considered the chief duty of the historian of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. And to come down to more recent times, it was not so very long ago that it was held that the study of contemporary newspapers was the only way to obtain a knowledge of nineteenth-century history. These ideas mark the transition from the old to the new methods of historical work. It is now realized that more trustworthy historical material is to be found in the permanent traces of the past that cannot have been prejudiced by human agency than in the testimony of contemporary histories, chronicles, memoirs, or newspapers. The history of Greece is now being rewritten with more certain knowledge and in juster proportion, since the archæologists, numismatists, and epigraphers have provided the modern historian with more and better understood materials than were possessed by his predecessor. Coins

and inscriptions are recognized as more valuable because less prejudiced sources of information than the text of Thucydides, and any one desiring to see the difference between the old and the new methods of work can find it illustrated by comparing Grote's "History of Greece" with its acute criticism of written sources, with Adolph Holm's "History of Greece" with its scholarly deductions from archæological discoveries and the study of coins. It is quite possible that Thucydides or any other contemporary writer might have fallen into error through ignorance, or have perverted the truth to justify his views; but when once the numismatist has fixed the date of a coin, or the epigrapher has decided the date and meaning of an inscription, the evidence of these permanent and unprejudiced witnesses must outweigh the statements of the contemporary historian. Similarly the history of the Middle Ages must be and indeed is being rewritten from the charters. The mediæval chroniclers fell into plenty of errors, as the modern newspaper writer may fall into error with regard to events that happened yesterday, and even where they were not misled by false infor-

mation and the rumors of tradition and from distant spots, they, being human men, were swayed by the national, professional, or personal prejudices of human men. But charters, using the word to designate the whole body of the official documents of the Middle Ages, when once they have been deciphered by the palæographer, and their date and genuineness decided by the specialist, form witnesses to facts, of whose *bona fides* there can be no doubt. During the greater part of the present century students of mediæval history used their critical faculties to find out the course of events in the past from a comparative study of mediæval chronicles and an ingenious harmonizing of their statements, checked when possible by a knowledge of charters. But now the charters themselves form the necessary basis of study, and the chronicles are more and more being recognized as possessing more literary than historical value. No one has done more in English history to note this change in the value of material than Mr. J. H. Round, whose "Geoffrey de Mandeville" is an excellent example of the new method of handling the material of mediæ-

val history. The same change of attitude may be observed with regard to the study of more modern history. The habit of working out the history of modern times from memoirs and contemporary pamphlets and for the latest period from newspapers is falling into desuetude. It is perfectly well recognized that the writer of memoirs is telling a story of which he is the central figure, even if he be not the apologist for his own career; the political pamphleteer and newswriter is not concerned to give the whole truth; and our experience of newspapers in daily life does not inspire absolute confidence in their accuracy of statement. It is as absurd to try to write modern history entirely from contemporary newspapers as to write the history of the Peloponnesian War entirely from Thucydides. It is from actual laws passed, official orders given, reports and dispatches actually received, that the history of the present century must be and is being rewritten. Of course the testimony of inscriptions, mediæval charters, and official documents is not irrefragable, but it is at least much less biased by human prejudice than the work of contemporary historian,

chronicler, memoir writer, pamphleteer, or newspaper reporter.

Before describing the change that has come over the study and the writing of history as a result of the modern conception of its aim and the modern methods of scientific investigation, it may be well here to point out the distinction between the study of history and the historical method of studying other subjects. The duty of the historian is to discover as far as he can and to narrate as impartially as he can what happened in the past, and in order to do this he should not hamper his work or his narrative by any ulterior motive. The political economist or the political philosopher or any other student of the activities of men may choose to deal with his subject by showing its history. The political philosopher, for instance, in his desire to explain certain existing political institutions, may find it indispensable to study the history of those institutions. His province is therefore different to that of the historian. To him the historical method is a means of explanation which he has a perfect right to adopt; but even the political philosopher and the political economist

might not be the worse for the hint that they would be wise to rely upon the investigation and narration of the trained historian. They might be tempted to find during their own historical researches justification for their theories which the unbiased investigator of the past would not recognize. A knowledge of what really happened in the past must be the basis of all so-called human sciences, dealing with man as an individual and man in society, and until that knowledge is correctly known and stated, the conclusions of the political philosophers and their brethren must be mere theories. Great as have been the gains made in the mastery of the human sciences during the present century by the adoption of the historical method, it may be safely asserted that still greater and more accurate knowledge will be attained when the labors of trained historians have secured a more approximately accurate knowledge of man's doings in the past than has yet been acquired.

The first marked result that has been brought about by the modern conception of history is that the literary presentation of the results of historical investigation is

regarded as of less importance than used to be the case. In the historian of the old school, when history was still a department of literature, it was the presentation of his ideas that counted rather than his diligence or his critical insight. It was for this reason that professors of history, even as late as Daunou in the present century, made it the prime duty of a historian to study not only the accepted models of historical narration, but also the epic poets and the novelists who had most successfully developed a literary style of description and narration. But now has come the great change of attitude. No educated person at the present time judges an historical work solely by its literary style, any more than he would judge a book on physics or chemistry or political economy or philosophy by its literary style alone. The literary presentation is of secondary instead of being, as it used to be, of primary importance to the reputation of a historian. Interesting and brilliant, but inaccurate historical works are now judged as literature and often take high place as literature, with historical fiction. But the test of the history as a history is now the dili-

gence of investigation, the accuracy of statement and the impartiality of observation of the writer.

It has come to pass, therefore, that historical writers are now objective rather than subjective. In literature, the subjectivity of the author as exhibited in his style gives him his rank; in history, as in natural science, the less subjective and the more objective the author's style, the better is his work. Historians of previous centuries, and a good many writers of the present century, who failed to realize that history is something more than a branch of literature, delighted in impressing what they were pleased to call their personality upon the works they called histories by means of a distinctive style and the expression of their own subjectivity, and thus their books contained rather their personal opinions about the past than narratives of what happened in the past. It may be very interesting, very stimulating, and very valuable in the formation of sound opinion upon great national, political, and ethical subjects to know the opinions on these matters of great men, like Thomas Carlyle or Thomas Babington Macaulay.

But the modern student of history desires to know what actually happened in the past, and he is naturally skeptical of the truth of narratives given by writers who deliberately color their works with their own opinions and their own personality.

Increased objectivity in literary presentation is the inevitable result of the scientific attitude. It is almost an insult to a historian of the modern school to say that his work can be recognized by its literary style. It is not his business to have a style. It is his business to narrate as clearly as possible what happened in the past, so that the reader may draw his own conclusions and make what generalizations he pleases, in full security that the facts are related as accurately as possible. The philosopher and the political economist can theorize with more pleasure and more usefulness when they have an accurate basis of knowledge to go upon. The development of objectivity in historical writing may indeed make history less interesting to the student of literature, but it certainly makes it infinitely more valuable to the student of the human sciences. Even the general reader, who reads history

not as a basis for further studies, but simply for information, gets more satisfaction when he knows that from the works of the modern historians he can learn what actually happened, whereas in reading the works of subjective historians he must ever be tantalized by a consciousness that the story, however brilliant or absorbingly interesting, is colored by the personality of the writer and gives his interpretation of the past rather than a faithful and accurate narrative.

If the former close connection between history and literature falsified the aim of the historian and damaged true historical work in that it placed eloquence of presentation in front of diligence of investigation and accuracy of description, it is by no means certain that the divorce of history from literature might not produce a different kind of disadvantage. The historian of the old school wrote books which could be read and understood by all classes of readers, since the fact that history was regarded as literature prevented the elaboration of a scientific terminology. It is the difficulty of the terminology, the unusual and weird words employed, that prevents the ordinary educated man from

reading many of the works of modern philosophers and from studying the results of modern scientific discoveries in the natural sciences. The indispensable preliminary to any work in the natural sciences and even in the more modern social sciences, but most especially in the study of metaphysics, is a careful training in terminology. Now history fortunately or unfortunately has not got a special terminology. The plain person who can read anything can read a historical work. This makes it possible for a much larger number of educated persons to read history than to read metaphysics or natural science. But on the other hand there is a distinct disadvantage in the fact that the historian has often to explain the meaning of the words he uses because they are understood in different senses, and many are the mistakes that have been caused by the failure of the writer to explain his exact meaning owing to a careless use of misunderstood terms. There is a danger lest the historian of the modern school, in his desire for accuracy of statement, may create for himself, as certain writers, especially in Germany, have done in dealing with the history of institutions, a terminology only

equaled in its abstruseness by that of the modern metaphysician. When this takes place, or if this takes place, history departs from its old sphere and clearly passes into the domain of those sciences which can be studied only by specialists, who have had a specialist's training. The danger is a very real one, as all students of modern historical monographs, especially in German, must admit. If the divorce between history and literature is to bring about this result, natural though the reaction from looseness of language to a specialist terminology may be, and the numbers of readers of history are thus to be diminished, history will lose its chief advantage over other subjects of a scientific nature. But though the danger threatens, it has not yet swamped the field of history, and a middle course may be hoped for, by which indeed the historian may regard his literary style as of less importance than his diligence in investigation or his accuracy in criticism, while retaining a sense of his obligation to write books that may be read by the general reader, even if he has to take more pains in presenting his results than the philosopher or the chemist. The advantage of having his books more

widely read by the general public comes down to him as the effect of the old connection between history and literature, and he should look to it that this advantage be not lost by a pedantic attempt to create a new terminology or by a conceited effort to confine his readers to a narrow body of special students.

It follows, then, that although accuracy, diligence, impartiality, and a trained critical faculty are the chief needs of the historian of the modern school, it is further necessary that he be able to express clearly the results of his labors in a literary form that shall be attractive and clear without yielding to the temptation of eloquence. This is a more important and difficult task for him, more than for the writer on natural science, whose terminology is the creation of a new language in which to express new things and new ideas. But in another respect the historian is affected more than the investigator into the natural or experimental sciences by the fact that in his work he is aided and also hindered by that most stimulating but dangerous faculty — imagination. The possession of a vivid imagination does not damage the work of a well-trained investigator in experimental or natu-

ral science. Such a student may imagine what he likes, but his results are positive or negative, and can be tested by other investigators. To the historical student the faculty of imagination is of value in that it gives him an insight into the past, which often enables him to reconstruct, as by a flash of inspiration, the story of the past; but it is a danger in that it may cause him to be warped in his examination of facts by a desire to build up a past which he sees only in his imagination. It is doubtless true that the man specially fitted for purely scientific investigation could never become a historian, because of the offense that the absence of definiteness in terms and the powerlessness to test his results by experiment would cause him. The imaginative student of natural or experimental science from the very nature of his work is less able to deceive himself than is the imaginative student of history; but on the other hand it is quite possible for a man without any imagination at all to be a successful investigator of natural phenomena, while the whole basis of interest in the story of past events lies in the imaginative power of understanding and reconstructing the past. Those historical stu-

dents in whom the faculty of imagination is so great that it indisposes them for diligent inquiry or accurate statement, and prevents them from even attempting a position of impartiality, can do and have done a great service in stimulating an interest in the past, and they have often through their imaginative genius made the past more real and more intelligible to thousands of readers, by conveying a sense of its true atmosphere, than the ablest historical writers, whose imagination is less vivid and whose powers of expression are less developed.

It is here, perhaps, as well to say a few words upon the great value of historical novels. I know that I differ from a great number of historical students in that I believe thoroughly in the value of historical fiction. After having spoken so strongly as the champion of accuracy and impartiality, it may appear strange to express emphatic approbation of the historical novel with its inaccuracies and its gross partiality. It is because the faculty of imagination with regard to the past finds its proper field in historical novels that their service to the cause of historical truth is so great. The more strong the attraction

towards correct and impartial history, the more enthusiastic must be the admiration felt for the writers of genius who can reproduce, be it ever so faintly, the atmosphere of the past. The reading of historical novels is likely to lead to a less incorrect knowledge of the past than the reading of inaccurate histories. Readers of Scott and Dumas and Kingsley and Weir Mitchell are much more likely to approach history with a stimulated imagination and a longing to discover the truth than readers of Froude and Carlyle and Bancroft. The readers of historical novels have borne in upon them, by the love story and the obvious inventions of the author, the knowledge that they are reading fiction, and they therefore do not fix definitely in their minds as absolute historical truths the historical surroundings in which the characters of the novelists are placed. Being confessedly fiction, the discovery of historical inaccuracy in the writings of the great historical novelists does not bewilder the mind as the discovery of similar inaccuracies in the works of professed historians. The reader can modify what he may discover to be false, or may reject what seems to him obviously incongruous when he knows

that he is reading fiction ; but such a mental process in the reading of what professes to be the truth arouses an uncomfortable skepticism which spoils the pleasure and advantage that should result from reading trustworthy history. But the advantage of reading historical fiction is positive as well as negative. The imagination once powerfully stimulated, an interest is aroused which often leads to a desire to find out what actually happened. Even if the atmosphere of the past given by great writers be not wholly accurate, it is yet not difficult to modify the inaccuracy without losing the interest that has been stimulated. Sir Walter Scott and Alexandre Dumas, with their marvelous power of seeing into the past, narrated far more accurately the life of the past than the inaccurate historians who call their work philosophical because it is not scientific. The value of historical fiction varies of course from the works of the great masters like Scott and Dumas to those of their modern imitators who think that the adoption of their style is likely to carry with it all their merits ; but in no historical novels, since they are all professedly imaginative, are such crimes committed against the cause

of historical truth as in many of the most esteemed works of the literary and philosophical historians, who profess to tell the truth while really indulging their deliberately perverted imaginations.

These remarks on historical fiction lead naturally to the final discussion of the attitude which every reader of books should adopt when reading volumes dealing with historical subjects. It is the first duty of every reader of such volumes to fix in his own mind as soon as possible the class to which the writer of the book perused belongs. This may be done by outside knowledge in the case of well-known books or in the case of new books by well-known writers, but in the case of new books the placing of the writer in his proper category can be done only by the use of the critical faculties of the reader himself. What makes the reading of historical fiction so little prejudicial for the grasp of historical truth is that it is avowedly fiction, and if historians could at once be placed in their proper categories, little harm would result from the reading of even the most partial and most inaccurate of histories. It is impossible here to do more

than give a hint or two toward aiding readers of history to estimate their attitude towards the books, labeled histories, which may come into their hands. History written by contemporaries, intensely interesting as it is, must necessarily be lacking in perspective and should be regarded as material for history rather than as history. A contemporary cannot by the nature of things see as clearly into the import of events as posterity; a contemporary cannot know the facts as accurately in all their bearing as the later student of documents; a contemporary, if he has played any part in events, or even if he has been only an observer, must necessarily have more bias and show more bias in dealing with matters that personally affect him; and finally, a contemporary is influenced by the mere fact that he is writing for a special audience, whether that audience be his own immediate family, his friends, or his enemies, or even for posterity. Take for instance Clarendon's "History of the Great Rebellion;" though entitled a history, it is really valuable primary material for the period of Clarendon, and where it is not an apology for the political party to which Clarendon be-

longed, it is a narrative based upon an active politician's point of view. With regard to histories not written by contemporaries, care must be taken to discount the personality of the writers just as much as in the case of contemporary writers themselves. The discounting must be done by a study of the personality of the writer: by a knowledge of the date at which he wrote, the theory of historical writing prevalent during his time, the amount of documentary evidence available for him, and the amount or absence of scientific training; by a consideration whether he belongs to the old philosophic and literary school or to the modern scientific school; by weighing his national, political and religious views; and most of all by a true understanding of his personality and his conception of his duty as a historian, his impartiality and his accuracy. In other words, either before or after a book labeled history is read, its author should be discounted in order that his statements should only be trusted so far as they deserve confidence. It is easy enough to discount a writer who shows violent prejudice in the treatment of his subject, and it is generally

easy enough to discount a writer who exhibits his intention upon every page. Take, for instance, Macaulay's magnificent "History of England," with its unrivaled word-pictures, the obvious saturation of its author's mind in the literature of his period, and its careful working up of details; yet the least experienced reader of history can perceive the trend of the famous writer's personality and can realize the grossness of his partiality, while the more experienced reader, who knows something of Macaulay's life and political career, can quickly perceive that his history is largely an apology for, and a glorification of, the founders of the English Whig party. Take again such a book as Buckle's "History of Civilization;" in spite of a certain parade of erudition and impartiality, the most careless reader cannot fail to perceive that the author is bolstering up a theory and endeavoring to prove that a certain philosophical scheme is justified by the facts of history. Take again Bancroft's "History of the United States;" is it possible to avoid observing the national prejudice which glows through the author's volumes even though the reader may commend

that prejudice as inflaming his own patriotic pride and possibly inspiring the same feeling in the breasts of others? Take lastly, as an instance of perverted powers, the historical work of James Anthony Froude; the author is one of the masters of modern English literary style, and the art of prose narration has never been more beautifully illustrated; but Mr. Froude did not belong to a school of writers that regarded impartiality or accuracy as of the slightest importance, and even if he had belonged to such a school he was affected by a curious and interesting disease which prevented him from stating the truth even when he perceived it. Many years ago one of the critics invented the word "Froudacity" to describe the attitude of Froude and writers afflicted with his disease toward facts. Froudacity is quite different from mendacity; it is not so much a perversion of the truth as an absolute inability to state it. Such men as Froude rank among the glories of English literature; but their genius for literary expression has done great harm to the study of history; and it may surely be argued that when men afflicted with Froude's

disease insist upon calling their books histories, the attention of innocent readers should be called to the fact that they are histories only in name, and, owing to the personality of the writers, are not to be classed with histories which endeavor to give accurate and impartial accounts of what happened in past ages.

Writers afflicted with Froude's disease and therefore unable to narrate the truth are unfortunately only too numerous, for their imagination has inspired them with an interest in the past, and the idea that history belongs to the domains of philosophy and literature has complete possession of their minds. But such writers are not more misleading than those patriotic historians, who deliberately deal with national history, because their breasts are filled with patriotism and they desire to prove the greatness of their fatherland. The more patriotic and therefore the more worthy such a writer may be as a citizen, the worse he must be as a historian. The glowing energy of his patriotism must affect his impartiality; he must be tempted to explain away such events in the national past as the development of the

world's consciousness has shown to be mistaken; and his books should therefore be studied and read, and it even may be argued should be encouraged in a scheme of national education, but their statements should not be too credulously and implicitly accepted as true by educated readers. It is necessary to discount the patriotic as well as the philosophical and literary historians, and no one who would know what really happened in the past should accept the statements of historical writers as necessarily conveying historical truth without taking into consideration the training, the nationality, the religion, and the personality of the writer, and knowing from the date at which he wrote and from his personal history the school of writers to which he belongs.

It might be well, in concluding, to dwell upon the names of some authors whose works illustrate the ideas that have been propounded. It should not be necessary before a Philadelphia audience to name the greatest American historical scholar of the modern scientific school. The name of Mr. Henry Charles Lea is perhaps better known among European than among American

scholars, but his reputation has been at its height for many years, and the results of his researches have profoundly affected the opinions now generally held both in Europe and in America upon the subjects to which he has devoted himself. The diligence of his labor, the certainty and accuracy of his criticism, the impartial presentation of the results of his labors, have placed Mr. Lea very high in the ranks of modern historians, and Philadelphia has the right to be proud of its eminent citizen. Among writers on American history who have mastered the principles of historical investigation and criticism, and who have best explained not only the passage of events but the meaning of American history, no writer ranks so high as Mr. Henry Adams. Speaking as a student of history who had never paid any special attention to the history of the United States before settling in America, it is the result of personal experience that has caused me to rank "The History of the United States during the Administrations of Jefferson and Madison" among the greatest historical works of the scientific historical school. Mr. Lea and Mr. Adams can justly

be classed with such men as Leopold von Ranke in Germany and William Stubbs, Bishop of Oxford, in England. Their skill in dealing with their material, their diligence in discovering and using primary authorities, their sure critical touch and their objectivity in presenting the outcome of their work prove that the methods and the aim of the modern historical school have taken root in the United States; and it may be hoped that they may rank among their followers a generation of trained and impartial historical students.

It may be possible, however, to make the point of this essay clearer, by criticising a great work of literature and philosophy which is in no sense of the word a history, than by dwelling on the special merits of modern scientific historians. It happens further that a certain familiarity with the subject enables me to deal with more certainty with this particular work. The great literary and philosophical book to which I allude, — a book which deserves to hold a permanent place in English literature and which has profoundly influenced the minds of political writers, but which infringes all the

canons laid down by the modern scientific historian, — is the famous work which Thomas Carlyle entitled "The French Revolution — A History." If he had entitled it "The French Revolution — A Rhapsody," an accurate idea of its contents would have been given. Carlyle's "French Revolution" holds and deserves to hold its place as an interesting example of a particular sort of English literary style, and as containing many interesting and profound remarks on politics, religion, and sociology; but it is not a history in the modern sense of the word, since Carlyle never had the faintest idea of what scientific investigation, accurate criticism, impartiality, or objectivity implied. These are strong statements and need to be proved one by one. The first thing demanded of a modern scientific historian is diligence in discovering and examining all possible material. Even the greatest diligence may not command success, for new material is constantly turning up in unexpected places, and much material is inaccessible to the scholar who has not the means to travel or to have copies made for him. Now when Carlyle was writing his "The French Revolution — A History,"

there existed in London, not two miles from the house wherein he lived, one of the most complete collections of documents dealing with the French Revolution in the world, the great collection in the British Museum, which had been gathered by the foresight and the labor of Mr. John Wilson Croker. Carlyle went to the British Museum and asked to have a room reserved for him in which he might study the documents in this great collection. He was not then a famous writer; he was a comparatively young man attempting his first historical work; but even if he had been the famous and eloquent writer he afterwards became, the British Museum authorities have no right to distinguish among scholars, however eminent, and cannot provide private rooms for every individual worker. Carlyle declined to work in the same room with any one else, and he therefore deliberately gave up the idea of using the accessible material that lay at his disposal; in other words, he did not show the greatest possible diligence in studying all accessible material, and avoided the vast mass of information and material upon his subject which existed in the library of the British

Museum because his request for personal privacy could not be granted. The next duty of the modern scientific historian is to treat his material with scientific accuracy of criticism. Carlyle was a great writer, a hard thinker, and in one sense of the word a great man; but he had neither the type of mind nor the training necessary for weighing evidence. No man calling himself a historian ought to have been taken in by such a palpable forgery as the "Squire Papers," which Carlyle used in his "Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell;" and that Carlyle was so taken in is the best proof of his want of knowledge of one particular subject he had selected for special work. But more eminent men than Carlyle have before and since his time been taken in by forgeries, and a clearer proof of his lack of the critical faculty can be found in an examination of his "French Revolution." Carlyle was ever fond of condemning the "Dryasdusts," as he called the diligent students who had collected historical material; he was ever fond of declaring that they did not know anything about history except useless details; but where Carlyle himself had to deal with

evidence he differed only from the Dryasdusts he condemned in that, even if it be granted that they showed no sense of proportion and were swamped by details, he handled his evidence according to his own preconceived ideas or his own willful fancy. Carlyle's love of the picturesque in history outweighed the love of truth he was always talking about, and he accepted the statements of his own authorities only when they catered to his love of the picturesque. Take, for instance, his treatment of one of the leading characters in the French Revolution, the celebrated "Friend of the People," Jean Paul Marat. Carlyle depicts Marat as a creature utterly impossible of existence, and accepting the libels of the Royalists writes of him as having been in 1789 a disreputable horse-doctor, "a blear-eyed dog-leech." Yet Carlyle used as his principal authority and quotes on nearly every page Buchez and Roux's "Histoire parlementaire de la Révolution Française," in which[1] is given a sketch of Marat's early life, showing that in 1789 he was a well-known figure in the life of Paris, who had enjoyed a considerable practice as a physician, had been connected with

[1] Vol. 28, pp. 303, 304.

the court, and was well known in literary and scientific circles. But to Carlyle the bleareyed dog-leech conception of Marat seemed more picturesque, and he therefore adopted it without hesitation and without testing its correctness. Another instance of the same unhistorical method of subserving truth to picturesqueness may be perceived in Carlyle's treatment of a still more famous figure in the French Revolution than Marat, — Maximilien Robespierre. Many writers characterize Robespierre's complexion as bilious, but not one has used the word *verdâtre* or greenish in this connection. Madame de Staël,[1] in describing a meeting with Robespierre before the Revolution, speaks of his complexion as "pale," but adds that the color of his veins was *verte* or green. Barbaroux's "Mémoires," the only other authority cited by Carlyle[2] for his description of Robespierre, contain no reference to Robespierre's personal appearance, but Berville and Barrière, in their edition of the "Mémoires,"[3] insert in a foot-note an account of Robespierre's personal appearance by Helen Maria

[1] *Considérations sur la Révolution Française*, second edition, vol. ii. p. 141.

[2] Book IV. chap. 4.

[3] Pp. 63, 64, foot-note.

Williams, an English lady who lived in France during the Revolution. In this account, Miss Williams makes no reference to his complexion, but says that he wore *verdâtre* or greenish spectacles. Carlyle seized upon the epithet, used only once by only one writer with regard to the color of his spectacles, and proceeds to qualify Robespierre throughout the whole of his rhapsody on the French Revolution, as the "sea-green incorruptible." The masterpiece of narration in Carlyle's "French Revolution" is the account he has given of the flight of the King, the Queen, and the royal family to Varennes on June 21, 1791. This narrative is so vivid that the very wheels of the yellow berline in which the royal family traveled may be almost heard upon the roads of France. But unfortunately there is hardly a single detail in the whole of that most dramatic piece of narration that is true to fact. Mr. Oscar Browning has devoted an essay to a careful examination of Carlyle's account of the flight to Varennes. He has not only carefully studied the documentary evidence, but has gone over the road himself, and he has shown that in every single possible detail

where a writer could go wrong, Carlyle had gone wrong. Nevertheless, Mr. Browning comes to the curious conclusion that although all the details are wrong, Carlyle's account of the flight to Varennes is essentially accurate. Instances such as these show how utterly unfit Carlyle was by temperament to write history in the modern sense of the word. As a master of dramatic and picturesque narration he might in another stage of the world's literature have been a great epic poet; he might had he been so inclined have been a most picturesque historical novelist; he is a brilliant instance of that theory of history which is defended by Macaulay in one of his essays, where he makes the statements that "history is a compound of poetry and philosophy," and that "facts are the mere dross of history." But if Carlyle wrote history in accordance with the older theories of the historian's duty, it yet may be emphatically asserted that he has no place among the ranks of the new school of scientific historians whose aim it is to discover and to narrate the truth.

The aim of the historian is to discover the truth with regard to the past, as far as his

limitations allow, and having so far discovered it to narrate the truth without obtruding his own personality or his own ideas more than his weak humanity makes inevitable. It is a hard enough and a difficult enough task that the modern historian sets before himself. Truth is a very unapproachable mistress. The harder the labor of approach, the further off she seems, and however laborious and careful the steps that may be taken, the more distant seems her icy throne. It is disheartening and heart-breaking to the historical student to know how little the most accomplished and most hard-working historian can do towards building a palace in which Truth may live. It is but one little stone that any single investigator may be able to contribute towards the building of that great palace; future laborers, with wider knowledge, better training, and greater means of investigation, must eclipse all that the most patient worker of to-day can do; and he cannot claim the place in literature that former historians successfully strove to win or that philosophical historians have attained in forcing great ideas upon the thought of their time. The work of the historical student

must be its own reward. His great encouragement is that however long it may take, or however wearisome may be the way, eventually he may be able to lighten the way of some future laborer. The moment may come when he may be able to contribute to the great cause of Truth a fragment of knowledge, and having been enabled to see some small thing accurately after years of labor, he may be able to draw the thing as he sees it and as it really is for the benefit of so pure and unapproachable a mistress as Truth. The one reward held out to the worker in history, as to the worker in every line of scientific investigation or artistic endeavor, is the hope that somewhere it may be possible to do good work free from the human limitations that weigh so heavily on the true historian's mind, the reward of which the greatest of living English poets speaks in one of the noblest stanzas that he has ever written, in which he says:

"And only the Master shall praise us, and only the Master shall blame;
And no one shall work for money, and no one shall work for fame,
But each for the joy of the working, and each, in his separate star,
Shall draw the Thing as he sees it for the God of Things as They are!"

MEMOIRS AND BIOGRAPHIES

REFERENCES

"Life of Samuel Johnson, LL. D.," by James Boswell.

"Life of Sir Walter Scott," by John Gibson Lockhart.

"The Journal of Sir Walter Scott."

"Familiar Letters of Sir Walter Scott."

"Life and Letters of John Gibson Lockhart," by Andrew Lang.

"A Publisher and his Friends. Memoir and Correspondence of the late John Murray."

"The Autobiography of Edward Gibbon."

MEMOIRS AND BIOGRAPHIES

When the dying Othello gave his last injunction to Lodovico and Montano,

> "When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,
> Speak of me as I am ; nothing extenuate,
> Nor set down aught in malice,"

he offered the best and most comprehensive advice which the great race of biographers and memoir writers have ever listened to and discarded. He also showed the touching simplicity and truthfulness of a character which even deception could not undeceive, when he placed this placid reliance upon those who had the telling of his tale, after Death had forever closed his lips. How could he have hoped that such a tangled web would be smoothed and raveled out in far-away Venice, where every citizen was naturally counsel for either plaintiff or defendant? Partisanship — the spirit of extenuation or of malice — lies at the bottom of every human heart, and colors every line which

human hand has written. What we lose in accuracy, we gain in interest, and in the dear delights of enthusiasm and animosity.

For half truths, however, those broken utterances which come bubbling up the well from the great, unloved goddess whom we all unite in holding below the water, there are no such mediums as the memoir and the biography. Looked at by themselves, they may seem false and misleading; but they shine with sincerity when compared to history, to the deliberate process by which long chains of events, the annals of the centuries, are turned and twisted, misconstrued and falsified, until the historian can force them — or what remains of them — to accord with his invincible prejudices. In the Memoirs of the Duc de Saint-Simon, for example, we have a picture of Louis the Fourteenth, drawn with the careful animosity of an ambitious but unsuccessful courtier, of a profound and crafty schemer whom the no less astute monarch always regarded with courteously concealed mistrust. Naturally Louis does not appear to advantage in these pages; yet, nevertheless, the simple narration of events day by day, and year by year, gives

us, almost against the writer's will, continued proofs of the king's patience and piety, his unfailing courage, his sagacity and self-control. But Mr. Froude and Lord Macaulay were under no such disadvantage as this, when they sat down to pick and choose from the vast accumulation of the past; and the pictures we have from them of the hated Stuarts, of the Queen of Scots, and of James the Second, are consistently free from these side-lights which disturb Saint-Simon's point of view. The monotonous badness of Macaulay's James is as far removed from the mere intermittent badness of Saint-Simon's Louis, as the monotonous goodness of Macaulay's William of Orange is removed from the intermittent goodness of Sully's Henry of Navarre. The two memoir-writers drew from life, and their portraits are warm with the touch of humanity. The historian drew from facts and hearsay, filling in the outlines with lights and shadows of his own devising. The work is masterly, but the human element is missing.

If the field of the biographer be necessarily a limited one, his compensation lies in the intimacy of his knowledge. He is not

called upon to paint a panorama, but one little garden patch, upon which his eyes continually dwell. The great march of events, the significance of every detail which, fitting into its appointed place, forms part of the majestic whole, a force in the appointed destiny of nations, — these things are for the historian to grasp and to interpret. The chronicler of a single life, a single reign, a few score years out of the endless flight of time, has a simpler task, and one which would by comparison seem easy, were it not for the number of sad failures which prove it harder than we think. He it is who furnishes the historian, the essayist, the novelist, with materials for their work. Memoirs are the great store-houses out of which more laborious writers draw inexhaustible supplies. When we read Lord Hervey, or Saint-Simon, or Sully, we are amazed by the familiarity of incidents which have been many times repeated since they were first set down by these keen observers of courts and courtly ways.

I hope it is not our innate and imperishable love of gossip which makes us so partial to books in which the author condescends

from time to time to gossip with us. Certain it is that the most popular works in the market to-day are volumes of letters which should never have been given to the public, biographies of people whose insignificant lives need never have been written, and reminiscences by men and women who have nothing of value or of interest to tell us. We have reached a point of idle curiosity which forces into print every pitiful scrap of correspondence which has lain sacred — or forgotten — in the bottoms of old desks, and every five minutes' chat with people of distinction. Any one who can tell us how he dined with Mr. Lowell, or drank tea with Mr. Longfellow, or handed a chair, when he was a little boy, to Mr. Emerson, makes haste to narrate this thrilling incident to a listening world. Any one to whom Mr. Lincoln said, "Thank you, sir," or who saw Lucretia Mott with an afflicting cold, or who can recall the exact moment and the exact words in which Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe expressed her very high appreciation of her own work, is eager to take the public into his confidence. Nothing is too insignificant, nothing too private, for narration; and the people who

read these gossipy reminiscences are not without an impression that they are cultivating their minds. There is a vague notion, not formulated in words, that all books which are not novels may be considered educational.

What the public craves, the purveyors to the public give with a generous hand. It is not too much to say that the English speaking world waited with manifest impatience for Mr. Gladstone to die, in order that it might hear hosts of trivial anecdotes from everybody who ever had the privilege of shaking hands with him; and that he had hardly been decently interred, before the great business of his biography occupied every mind. Lord Rosebery is credited with saying that no single man could adequately write such a life; it should be the work of a company: which notion caused Mr. Punch to wax merry over the "Gladstone Biography Co. Limited," and revealed, even to those who think little of such matters, the distance between the old methods and the new. The task assigned to Mr. Morley will no doubt be admirably fulfilled, and the world of fashion, which loves to

have cabinet anecdotes dropped into its lap, will buy these solid sugar-plums at any price. The astute counsel of Talleyrand, who believed that all memoirs of a political character should be withheld from the world for two generations, wins little heed from people whose literary tastes are for the private and the personal; who thirst to hear Prince Bismarck revile his royal master, and to whom Mr. Gladstone's unhappy relations with General Gordon have a keener interest than the whole history of the Indian Empire.

But the great biographies of the world have not been tasks assigned to successful competitors, like the building of post-offices and railway-stations; and the great memoirs of the world have not been those rushed into print to gratify pressing curiosity, and supply food for gossip. There was but one man in all England who could have written Johnson's life, and he wrote it. There was but one man in all England who could have written Sir Walter Scott's life, and he wrote it. The result of this inevitableness is that we possess to-day two masterpieces of literature, of more value than a whole library of

modern task-work, and better worth reading than all the insignificant Lives, Letters, Memoirs, Reminiscences, Recollections, and kindred volumes under which our library shelves are groaning. Now there is nothing that we should shrink from more sensitively than advising people to read books. In the first place it savors of arrogance, and, in the second place, of brutality, for the burden of books already placed upon the shoulders of the student is heavier than can be borne. It is not too much to say that the works especially recommended this year in connection with the University Extension Lectures would require a whole lifetime to read and to digest; — yes, and a lifetime of exceptional leisure, to say nothing of a very exceptional intelligence, and confirmed habits of study. Naturally one does not want to pile Pelion upon Ossa; and it is a melancholy truth, which might as well be recognized in the start, that most of the great biographies and memoirs are very, very long, and that they cannot by any possibility be abridged, without irreparable loss. There are, happily, a few exceptions, a few little books charming as they are brief. Southey's

"Life of Nelson" is a model of biography in miniature, a duodecimo masterpiece, in which an exquisite sense of adjustment is shown in the selection and the narration of events. In this Lilliputian volume everything is on a harmoniously small scale; there is no intruding Gulliver of an incident to take up all the room; and the style is marked by good taste, simplicity, and an agreeable absence of hysteria. The "Life of Nelson" is equaled in conciseness — a happy conciseness far removed from encyclopædic cramming — only by Gibbon's admirable autobiography, which any one can read in a leisurely afternoon. What praise is too high for a man whose "History of the Roman Empire" fills five large volumes, and whose history of himself is not much longer than a pamphlet? Were Gibbon living now, he would compress his Roman Empire into one moderately small book, something that would fit into an historical primer, or "Story of the Nations" series; and he would expand his memoirs, until they embraced every insignificant incident of every man or woman of distinction he had met since the age of five.

It is not this mere multiplication of trivialities which makes Boswell's "Life of Johnson" so inordinately, so endearingly long. Boswell, indeed, has a genius for leaving nothing unsaid; but every incident he narrates, every bit of conversation he repeats, has a definite value in illustrating the character of the great, and good, and supremely lovable man about whom he was writing, and about whom we can never hear enough. Who but Dr. Johnson could emerge triumphantly from such a biography as this, a biography which throws a search-light upon a man from youth to age, which softens nothing, conceals nothing, leaves nothing untold? We know how good Hannah More met Boswell when he was hard at work upon his immortal book, and, with that readiness to offer advice which was ever her distinguishing characteristic, said to him sentimentally, "I beseech your tenderness for our virtuous and most revered departed friend. I beg you will mitigate some of his asperities." Whereupon Boswell, with a wisdom born of his supreme fitness for his task, replied with becoming indignation that he would not cut off Dr. Johnson's claws, nor make a tiger a

cat, to please anybody. Happy it is for us that the great Prince of biographers could not be seduced from the paths of integrity by the beguiling voice of woman; but think how terrible it would have been, and what the world would have suffered and lost, had our modern methods been in practice a hundred years ago, and had Hannah More, who enjoyed an enviable literary reputation, been solemnly appointed by executors and legatees to write the "Life of Johnson."

"A book," said the great doctor tersely, "should help us either to enjoy life, or to endure it." His own biography does both. It is a tonic, and the best of tonics, for mind, and heart, and soul; and it is also, incidentally, a readable work from the first page to the last. His courage shames our cowardice; his splendid impregnable common sense shines like a white light, dispelling all the mist of absurdities in which we wrap ourselves. Could his spirit be reincarnated once in every century, we should all be better and happier, and we should escape much dangerous nonsense, especially that sentimental falsifying of motives which confounds the seven deadly sins with the cardinal vir-

tues. Johnson's mind, thanks largely to his sense of humor, was complication-proof where goodness and badness were concerned; and the reading and re-reading of his biography — the whole biography, not any mean-spirited abridgment or peddling selections — is wonderfully efficacious in clearing away our spiritual cobwebs. If his relentless, undeviating common sense wounds our vanity, his human kindness heals the hurt. "A true brother of men is he, and filial lover of the earth," cries Carlyle with noble enthusiasm; and, reading the words, there comes to us a clear understanding of the difference between these two men who gave so much to humanity. Johnson, like Sir Walter Scott, was a "brother of men, and filial lover of the earth;" one to whom the theories of socialism were odious, but who practiced in quiet those virtues which socialists noisily preach. Carlyle turned from his brother men and from his mother earth in angry scorn of the folly he could not pity, and of the wickedness he could not mend. It came to him, as it came to Johnson, to be stript of all secrecy, all veil and masque, and to be held up naked by his biographer to the slow scrutiny of the

world. Boswell did this thing at the dictate apparently of some rare instinct, which aided his inferior intelligence and made him supremely fitted for his work. Mr. Froude's intelligence needed no such bolstering, and received none. His motives are unfathomable, but the result of his deed was the chilling of men's affections, the withering of men's esteem. It is as difficult to love Carlyle after reading Mr. Froude's book, as it is impossible to forbear loving Dr. Johnson after reading Boswell. Character, not intellect, insures victory in the long, hard battle of life, and is the open sesame to our tired hearts. "Boswell's book," says Mr. Birrell, "is an arch of triumph, through which, as we read, we see his hero passing into eternal fame, to take up his place with those

> 'Dead but sceptred sovereigns, who still rule
> Our spirits from their urns.'

Froude's book is a tomb, over which the lovers of Carlyle's genius will never cease to shed tender but regretful tears."

It is possible to write an almost perfect biography without taking the public wholly and unreservedly into confidence. Lockhart, in his masterly life of Sir Walter Scott,

maintains a dignified reserve, a decent reticence, concerning things which good taste naturally withholds from the gaping curiosity of the world. This does not mean that he deliberately ignores one side of Scott's life while elucidating the other, in the fashion of so many recent biographers; nor that he eliminates the element of humanity, and leaves us nothing but the novelist and poet. When we read, for example, the life of Lord Tennyson, published by his son three years ago, the incompleteness of the picture is felt from the first page to the last. Here, indeed, was a great poet, leading an ideal life, remote from sordid cares, detached from vulgar ambitions, wedded wholly and unreservedly to his art. Here was a man steadfast in friendship, irreproachable in conduct, his mind attuned to noble things; — with a clear judgment, a delicate sense of humor, and an absorbing passion for perfection. Here was England's great Laureate, who all his life lived in beautiful places, no matter how far away the butcher and the baker might be, who read his poems aloud to his friends, thrilling with fine emotions as he did so, and who died with an open Shakespeare

on his bed. It is a finished portrait of the artist, exquisite in every detail; and only lacking humanity. Boswell's Johnson leans out from the London fogs, and grasps us by the hand. Lockhart's Scott smiles on us from the fair lawns of Abbotsford, and our hearts quicken and grow glad as if we really stood before that kindly presence. But Tennyson is a shadow among shadows. There is no warmth nor light in his son's loving delineation. Even the stories told in these volumes, admirable though they be, do not illustrate the character of the Laureate. The girl who wrote to him when he was at the zenith of his fame, asking him to send her an unpublished poem, which she might read as her own at a picnic; the Lincolnshire farmer who expressed his disbelief in hell as a place which no constitution could stand, are delightful, but we could enjoy them just as well in another setting. It is not so with Boswell's multitudinous anecdotes, nor with the delicious description Lockhart gives of the visit to Keswick and Rydal; of Wordsworth stalking along, spouting his own poetry "very grandly all the way;" and Scott listening patiently, courteously, kindly, never

making, nor suffering his indignant son-in-law to make even the shadow of an allusion to any part *he* might be playing in the great sphere of letters.

It is no shame to any biographer to be outdone by Lockhart, because none other ever had a man like Sir Walter to write about. To read Scott's novels is one of the recognized pleasures of life; a pleasure which the wise old world — which knows more than its teachers can tell it — will never be lectured into abandoning. But to read his biography, to read his letters, to read his journal, is to grow in love with earth because such a man has lived on it. Lockhart's proud and melancholy reserve had melted like a snowdrift under this genial influence; and to him, more than to other men, had come an intimate knowledge of Scott's sane and manly virtues, his kindness, his patience, his courage, his unostentatious acceptance of near duties, "his absolute immaculate freedom from the literary sins of envy, jealousy, and vanity." "As I sat by his side at table," wrote Maria Edgeworth, "I could not believe he was a stranger, and I forgot he was a great man." "Sir

Walter," said his faithful old servant, Tom Purdie, "always speaks to every man as if he were his born brother." Never did any one preach less and practice more, and it is wonderful how the best and the worst of us weary of precept, and reverence example. We listen with the faintest stirring of the spirit to the noblest exhortations; but we are filled with admiration and with wholesome shame when we remember Charles Lamb playing cards night after night with his fretful old father, or Dr. Johnson's unfaltering kindness to the helpless and disagreeable dependents whom he sheltered under his humble roof, or Sir Walter sitting by the bedside of the little hump-backed tailor, into whose dull and miserable life he had brought the only gleams of sunshine. It is better to read these things than to read sermons; and I know of no incident in all the annals of famous men more beautiful or more touching than that told by Lockhart of Scott's last illness; how he lay for a short time in a London hotel, before being carried back to die at Abbotsford, and how two workingmen stopped Allan Cunningham on Jermyn Street

and said to him: "Do you know, sir, if this is the street where *he* is lying?" "As if," cried Lockhart in a sudden burst of pride and sorrow, "as if there were but one death-bed in London!"

Scott's story has reached completion. What Lockhart so well began was continued by the publication of the "Journal," and of the "Familiar Letters," and finished by Mr. Lang's admirable "Life of Lockhart," which rounds the cycle and leaves nothing more to be told. Never was chronicle more detailed; never were details more harmonious. Mr. Lang reaches Lockhart through Scott, just as most of us reach Scott through Lockhart; and the narrative of one life involves necessarily the narrative of the other. That Sir Walter should have found his biographer in his son-in-law was inevitable, and the result is a masterpiece of literature, a leisurely masterpiece which yet cannot bear abbreviation. That Lockhart should have found *his* biographer in Mr. Lang is one of those happy accidents which makes us believe for the nonce in poetic justice, and the result is a charming book, full of delicate sympathy and appreciation.

In these days when enthusiasm is deemed misleading, it is well to bear steadfastly in mind a truth which, like other truths, is suffering from neglect, — namely, that no good biography was ever written without it. Mr. Purcell's "Life of Cardinal Manning" has recently proved what needed no proving, — that a book animated by a spirit of cold animosity is, by the very quality of its defects, hopelessly alienated from the truth. It is not possible for us, perhaps it is not well for us, to subdue our antipathies; but if we heartily dislike a man, we should not undertake to write his life, nor to edit his work. It is idle folly to try to deceive ourselves with arguments about justice and honesty. We may not be just and honest when we inordinately admire; we are sure to be neither just nor honest when we cherish an aversion. Mr. Elwin's editing of Pope was a literary sin as well as a literary blunder; and the pathetic inadequacy of task-work was never more clearly illustrated than when Mrs. Oliphant was asked to write a life, even a short life, of Richard Brinsley Sheridan. What had Mrs. Oliphant in common with that most lovable scapegrace,

whose shortcomings were precisely of the kind which women are least likely to condone? She tried hard to be just, but it is not justice that Sheridan asks from the world; and the liberality of a man always in debt, the wit of a man mostly in liquor, found scant favor in the Scotchwoman's rigid eyes. Better it would have been to have borne always in mind Lord Byron's admirable advice to Moore, when the latter was meditating his "Life of Sheridan," and felt naturally somewhat daunted by the difficulties in his path. Byron bids him not to fear these difficulties, and not to make too much of them. "Never mind the angry lies of the humbug Whigs," he writes cheerfully. "Recollect that Sheridan was an Irishman, and a clever fellow, and that *we* have had some very pleasant days with him."

The "noble poet" was right, and showed his wonted sagacity in literary matters. These *were* the things to remember. We can learn more about this "wandering star" from the half-dozen anecdotes scattered throughout Lord Byron's letters than from the whole of Mrs. Oliphant's conscientious

little volume. Byron it is who tells us the immortal story of Sheridan's being found extremely drunk on the street one night, and of the watchman's insisting on knowing his name; whereupon the great dramatist — never too far gone for a ribald jest — raised his head, and solemnly hiccoughed out "Wilberforce." Byron it is who tells us how on the night when the "School for Scandal" was first given to a rapturous public, and the theatre rang with applause, the elate but intoxicated author was arrested for making a row in the streets, and locked up in a guard-house, while the gay throngs driving homeward praised the wit and brilliancy of the new play. As for Sheridan's power to please, to win, to charm, it is Byron also who gives us an apt illustration of this in an amusing letter to Moore.

"In 1815," he writes, "I had occasion to visit my lawyer in Chancery Lane, and found him with Sheridan, who, after mutual greetings, withdrew. Before recurring to my own business, I could not help inquiring that of Sheridan's. 'Oh!' replied the attorney, 'the usual thing! To stave off an action from his wine merchant, my client.'

'Well,' said I, 'and what do you mean to do?' 'Nothing at all, for the present,' said he. 'Would you have us proceed against old Sherry? What would be the use of it?' And here he began laughing, and going over Sheridan's good gifts of conversation. Now from personal experience, I can vouch that my attorney is by no means the tenderest of men, nor particularly accessible to any kind of impression out of the statute or record. Yet Sheridan in half an hour had found the way to soften and seduce him in such a manner that I almost think he would have thrown his client (an honest man with all the laws and some justice on his side) out of the window, had he come in at the door. Such was Sheridan. He could soften an attorney! There has been nothing like it since the days of Orpheus."

"Great men taken up in any way are profitable company," says Carlyle; and it is a comfort to hear so rigid a moralist enunciate this truth. For there is often a side to great men which does not seem to be so purely profitable as we might desire. Byron himself is far from edifying, though he too has been supremely happy in his biographer.

Laugh as we may at the extravagance of Moore's praise, and at the open homage paid by the grocer's son to the peer of England; shrink as we may from details necessarily detestable; yet the sympathy and the intelligence of Moore brought him close, close to the truth; and the more we learn about Byron in these late days, when his star shines once again in the ascendant, the more clearly do we recognize the fidelity of this loving and elaborate portrait. It is true that no volumes which held Lord Byron's letters could fail to interest, even had the biography been of the feeblest; but Moore's narrative possesses a vital charm, and the intimacy of his knowledge gave him an insight into the nobler side of that wayward nature which habitually turned its worst and harshest aspect to the world. A demon of perverseness ruled Lord Byron's life, foredooming it to failure; but the Irishman's gay blue eyes saw easily enough how, through all this insincere misanthropy, this petulance and irritability, there shone, not only the splendid light of genius, but the flickering rays of a generosity which, perpetually misplaced, could never be wholly extinguished.

It is well, at the same time, to bear in mind that Moore, although unreservedly loyal to his friend, is neither hysterical in adulation nor misleading in defense. If we turn from his bulky volumes to Dowden's "Life of Shelley," we see what happens when a biographer permits his emotions to overwhelm his judgment. "Professor Dowden," says Mr. Matthew Arnold, "holds a brief for Shelley; he pleads for him as an advocate pleads for his client." What is worse, his pleadings become at times so feverishly sentimental, that we are lifted from the firm and familiar ground of right and wrong, sense and nonsense, and set swimming in a world of vapor. Surely a life so full of beauty, so instinct with the noblest impulses of humanity, could bear to be simply told. In fact, a simple telling is always best; for not all the fine writing in Christendom can make Shelley's behavior to his wife and children other than what it was. It may be true, as Professor Dowden gracefully insinuates, that "to youth swift and decisive measures seem the best;" but when these measures involve the desertion of a wife, and the "swift and decisive" departure to

the continent with another woman, they are not best even for youth, even for the youth of a poet. For "genius does not repeal the Decalogue," and such deeds offend us least when stript of the false sentiment which strives to hallow them. That a biographer should seek to excuse Shelley by traducing Harriet is a refinement of cruelty savoring of the advocate, and of the foul methods of the law-courts. Moore's sympathy for Byron never takes the form of defending the indefensible. Even the natural indignation he felt at the cruel silence of Lady Byron, which permitted her husband's character to be the sport of every slanderous tongue, tempted him to none of those generous untruths which crumble away under the feet of our clay idols. It is strange that Professor Dowden, who so highly extols Southey's little life of Nelson for its simplicity and lack of sentimentalism, should have ruthlessly neglected to practice the very virtues which he commends. Othello's counsel, which he of all men could have afforded best to follow, has fallen on no deafer ears than his.

Perhaps it is because we have been shown uninterruptedly for many years the points

of view of the poet, the novelist, the philosopher, the statesman; because the biographers of these gentlemen are always pointing out to us the supreme importance of poetry, fiction, philosophy and politics, that we were so refreshed and delighted when the memoirs of John Murray were published nine years ago, and we were invited to step behind the curtain, and look at matters for once from the point of view of the publisher, of the great prince publisher, whose judgment, taste, and unbounded liberality won for him a unique place in the history of English letters. The correspondence in these volumes has an interest all its own, embracing, as it does, letters from so many eminent authors who write with the peculiar frankness of men seeking their own gain, lauding their own wares, and revealing their own minds with unstinted egotism. The enormous sums paid by Murray — two thousand pounds for the third Canto of "Childe Harold," three thousand pounds for "Lalla Rookh," fifteen hundred pounds for Mme. de Staël's "Germany," which nobody would read — dazzled the literary world, and prompted every man who wrote, or who wanted to write poem, play, or essay, to turn

to the great publisher for assistance. The letters show us, as in a series of pictures, the childish vanity of James Hogg, the arrogance and irritability of Leigh Hunt, the greed of Mme. de Staël, the bewildering verbosity of Coleridge, the gayety of Moore, the petulance — so quickly repented of and atoned for — of Lord Byron, the rare modesty of Sir Walter Scott, the inexhaustible self-esteem of Southey. "I was aware," wrote the author of "Kehama," "that I was planting acorns, while my contemporaries were setting Turkey beans."

"An editor," says Mr. Lang sympathetically, "is engaged in a kind of intellectual egg-dance among a score of sensitive interests;" and a publisher enjoys much of the same difficult diversion. Vanity and irritability are the twin demons that hold the author's soul in keeping, and they are the kind of demons which no holy water will subdue. Murray's patience, courtesy, and sense of humor endured to the end; and now and then even he met with his reward. A young Quaker once sent him some poems, and the letter, politely declining them, went by mistake to the lad's father, who bore the

same name, and who wrote gratefully in reply: —

Esteemed Friend, — I feel very much obliged by thy refusal to publish the papers sent thee by my son. I was entirely ignorant of anything of the kind, or should have nipt it in the bud. On receipt of this, please burn the whole that was sent thee, and at thy convenience, inform me that it has been done. With thanks for thy highly commendable care, I am respectfully thy friend,

John Procter.

Such are the compensations of the publisher.

If English literature be singularly rich in biography, it is to France we must turn for the great memoirs which have so materially aided history; which began with the immortal chronicles of Froissart, the vivid pages of Philippe de Comines, the narrative, so full of gayety and grace, which the Cardinal de Retz bequeathed to a delighted world. The memoirs of Sully and of Saint-Simon are of inestimable value, describing as they do the daily lives of Henry the

Fourth and of Louis the Fourteenth, the characters of the two monarchs and of those who surrounded them, the faults and foibles, the virtues and vices of prominent contemporaries. Saint-Simon is naturally the greater gossip of the two. He was a courtier, with little else to do save hoard and repeat the unedifying details of a rather unedifying court. He is not, indeed, hopelessly enamored of scandal like the Count de Gramont or his chronicler; but he has a hearty relish for it, and employs his extraordinary powers of observation, his keen and ruthless intellect, in the detection and exposure of his neighbor's manifold shortcomings. So conscious is he of this quality in his work, that when he would fain speak of the life and death of M. de Rancé, the saintly and austere Abbot of La Trappe, who was his personal friend, and whom he ardently loved and revered, he checks himself after a sentence or two, declaring sadly that it is not fit such goodness and holiness should be described in the pages of so profane a book as his.

The memoirs of Maximilien de Béthune, Duc de Sully, deal with different matters, or

rather they deal with all matters of any importance at the period. He knew life in its varying phases, and he played an important part in the history of France. An indifferent courtier, but a most loyal servant; a reckless soldier, a prudent statesman, a clean liver, and the greatest financier in Europe, he gave to Henry of Navarre the unswerving devotion of a lifetime. His robust candor suited that truth-loving monarch; his cold astuteness checked and controlled the passionate fluctuations of the King. Himself a sturdy Protestant, he yet spared no pains in persuading Henry to accept the Roman Catholic religion, and evinced always the keenest delight at his master's steadfast attachment to his new creed. What gives, indeed, to these memoirs their peculiar value and charm, is the breadth of the author's view, his power of observation and analysis. He has little of Saint-Simon's grace and vivacity; he is prolix, and determined to leave nothing untold. He spares his readers no detail, either of a financial crisis, or of a cold in the King's head. We know even the number of handkerchiefs — eight and ten a day — which Henry used under these cir-

cumstances; and, indeed, who but the King of France would ever have had so many handkerchiefs at a time when they were not the cheap matter-of-course little articles they are now? Sully tells us, with the same naïve truthfulness, how hard it was for him to choose a rich and influential wife, instead of the impoverished young beauty whom he loved; and how sincerely he rejoiced at his own discretion in selecting the more solid advantages. He married the heiress, showed her, he assures us, "the tenderness and assiduity due to an amiable bride;" and, when she died a few years later, regretted her so sincerely that "for a whole month" his heart was deprived "of every other passion but grief."

Side by side with these intimate outpourings are the shrewdest observations ever passed upon nations and those who govern them. Sully's serene breadth of vision, his generosity and tolerance, enabled him to grasp truths not patent to every eye, not welcome to every heart. He can find no words warm enough in which to praise the splendid generalship of France's great antagonist, the Prince of Parma. His admiration

for Elizabeth of England, to whose court he was sent on a secret embassy, did not in the least interfere with the deep respect he felt for Philip the Second of Spain; and there is a profound truth conveyed in his significant assertion that Philip's nobler qualities, his asceticism, his singlemindedness, his superb fortitude, his patience and piety, were all alike "lost on the vulgar." Sully was himself a prince of opportunists, one who would permit neither tradition nor religion to stand in the way of advancement; but he respected that devotion to both which made the King of Spain the most isolated monarch in Europe. For his own master, whether as Prince of Navarre or as King of France, he bore an affection which never faltered. He built up Henry's fortunes while he built his own, and he never hesitated to anger him by opposition, when such opposition saved him from folly. He knew the strength as well as the weakness of that royal nature; and he expressed it in a single sentence pregnant with truth. "If the King were, as they say, a slave to women," he wrote, "yet they never regulated his choice of ministers, decided the destinies of his ser-

vants, nor influenced the deliberations of his council." Think what the English speaking world would have gained if Burghley, who possessed many qualities in common with Sully, had devoted *his* leisure to voluminous memoirs, and had left us just such an accurate picture of the great and royal vixen whom he served, and of that merry England then riotous with the mere joy of living.

For the English memoirs that we know best, though of exceeding interest, have little that is joyous, or beautiful, or inspiriting to narrate. The wonderful picture which Lord Hervey has painted of the court of George the Second inspires nothing but disgust, unrelieved, as it is, by the gayety, the grace, the almost childish spirit of frolic, which makes the licentiousness of Versailles not less evil, but less ugly and repellant. Perhaps this is the reason why Thackeray so cordially hated Lord Hervey, whose memoirs supplied him, nevertheless, with abundant material for "The Four Georges;" — with the matchless scene, for example, at the deathbed of his most sacred Majesty, King George the Second, and with the closely drawn characters of Queen Caroline, and

that very great statesman, Sir Robert Walpole. Lord Hervey truly admired both the Queen and Walpole. He liked unflinching courage and strong common sense. He liked, in fact, those useful qualities which were of service to the state, and saw no reason why a Prime Minister should display precisely the virtues which decorate the Archbishop of Canterbury. "Priests to pray, and kings to rule," said Charlotte Elizabeth, mother of the Regent d'Orléans; and Lord Hervey was of a somewhat similar opinion. He was not disedified, only amused, when the Queen, "to save time," obliged her chaplain to read the morning prayers in one room, while she dressed comfortably in another; but he was wholesomely angry, and not amused at all, when the Commons were more than ordinarily shameless in voting away the people's money. "When shame comes to be divided among five hundred," he writes scornfully, "the portion of every man is so small that it hurts their pride as little as it disconcerts their countenances;" and this truism supplies the keynote of all similar situations. Legislative and corporate bodies will cheerfully stoop to infamies from

which the least honorable member would shrink in his own private capacity. The blame can be shifted so easily from shoulder to shoulder, that no sense of degradation wounds the sinner's self-esteem.

Lord Hervey's memoirs are manifestly ill-natured. He cannot always spare those whom he likes, and those whom he hates he transfixes with an unmeasured scorn, expressed in language so felicitous, we could not forget it if we would. Lyttelton may have been an unattractive man; he was certainly ugly and awkward; but when Lord Hervey says of him that "every feature was a blemish, every limb an encumbrance, and every motion a disgrace," we wince at such a wanton refinement of cruelty.

Ill-nature, however, plays an equally prominent part in the more recent and more familiar memoirs of Mr. Charles Greville, a close and pitiless observer, who knew, and knew well, nearly all the distinguished men of his day. It is quite apparent that Mr. Greville was restrained by no sentiment of kindness, and by no sense of respect or propriety. He spared neither his friends nor his hosts. He would break bread at a man's table, and then

go home and ridicule him in his journal. He lacked that refinement of language which alone can make censoriousness agreeable. We all like to hear our rulers disparaged; we like to hear about the follies and faults of those high in power; but it is essential to our enjoyment that these strictures should be spoken in a polite and respectful manner, in clear cut words polished like a rapier, not after the coarse fashion of the market-place. To call a king or a president an ass, a buffoon, and a blackguard is as offensive as to accuse mankind in general of vulgarity. We merely wonder, when we read such lines, what was the writer's peculiar standard of good-breeding.

Yet if the Greville memoirs lack grace, and delicacy, and distinction; if their author be mainly animated by a spirit of animosity, and by the vigorous contempt of a true Briton for all countries, creeds, and customs save his own, he has at least the merit of having written a supremely readable book. It is much easier to find fault with it than to put it down. It shows us very clearly and very intimately much that is well worth seeing. Mr. Greville does not gossip about

insignificant things; he is not garrulous; he does not try to make copy out of trivialities. He is keen, trenchant, and, if not witty himself, full of the wit of others. He tells delightful stories, his pages are rich mines of anecdote about interesting people, and they have vitality, — that indefinable characteristic which keeps them fresh for each new generation. Their very aggressiveness, the vanity and self-sufficiency rampant in every line, makes them quiver with life. Be it remembered that Disraeli — no mean judge — gave the palm of conceit to Mr. Greville above all competitors, "although," said the Prime Minister conclusively, "I have read Cicero, and I knew Bulwer Lytton."

In closing, I can only say once more that the great biographies and memoirs are very long. They cannot be read at a gulp. They cannot be abridged. On the other hand, they need not be read at all. I am aware that extension lecturers are in the habit of recommending with each lecture a course of reading which, if followed, would greatly advance education, and stimulate the book trade. I am aware also that life is short, and full of many duties which have no bearing

upon our intellectual advancement. Most of us have something else to do besides improve our minds. A few of us still turn resolutely from conducted tours through the great world of letters, knowing that it is not possible to extend our friendships right and left at the bidding of self-appointed directors. We may, indeed, gain a great deal of information from the condensed biographies which have been provided for us with an unstinted hand. These books give what are called the salient points of a great man's career, and they give them with admirable brevity and correctness. There are people so constituted that they remember these points, and so gain much knowledge swiftly. That they do not know the man himself, what manner of man he was, matters little. They know what books he wrote, what battles he fought, how many years he was Prime Minister of England. We may also, if we are so disposed, read selections from the world's great masterpieces, picked out and arranged for us by those industrious critics who have kindly consented to act as nursery governesses to the rising generation. Or, if we are unambitious, if "Lady Vanity" does not so much

as pat us on the shoulder, we may take a few books into our hearts, and let the others go. We may learn a little, and cheerfully confess ignorance of the rest. If, for example, we read Lockhart's "Life of Scott," with the more recently published Journal, and the Familiar Letters; if we then read Mr. Lang's "Life of Lockhart," and the memoirs of John Murray, we shall be fairly well acquainted, not only with Sir Walter, to know whom is a "liberal education," but with one of the most interesting periods in English literature. But of course, in the time required for this, we might run swiftly down the centuries, under the personal guidance of some friendly man of letters. It is after all a matter of choice. One tourist goes around the world with Cook, looks at all he is told to look at, and comes home full and happy. Another lingers those long months away in Rome, and, when they are over, feels that he has but turned the first page of the Immortal City's book. We need not quarrel with our neighbor's methods, nor deem ourselves superior because we choose our own.

SOCIOLOGY, ECONOMICS, AND POLITICS

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SOCIOLOGY, ECONOMICS, AND POLITICS

It is the work of the biographer or the historian to gather the events which group themselves about some man or body of men, and trace the subtle sequences of causation by which they are connected. The task of the student of political theory, whether he call himself economist, jurist, or sociologist, is a more ambitious and a more perilous one. His explanations of political events must be general instead of specific. It is not enough for him to correlate the occurrences of a particular life or a particular period. He must frame laws which will enable his followers to correlate the events of any life or any period with which they may have to deal, and to sum up in a single generalization the lesson of many such lives and periods.

This is the kind of result at which the sociologist must aim, if he has the right to call himself a sociologist at all. His manner of

reaching it will depend upon his individual character. It may be in flashes of genius like that of Burke. It may be by the strict observance of logical processes like those of John Stuart Mill. It may be — and this is the most common method of all — by a painstaking study of history like that of Aristotle or Adam Smith. Such a study of history the sociologist is at some stage of his progress practically compelled to make. The most brilliant genius must verify his theories by comparing them with the facts. The most astute logician must test the correctness of his processes by applying his conclusions to practical life. In default of such study we have not a work of science, but a work of the imagination. This is the character of books like Plato's "Republic," like More's "Utopia," like Bellamy's "Equality." It is to a less degree the character of books like Rousseau's "Contrat Social" or George's "Progress and Poverty." Each of these is a work of genius; but in Plato or Bellamy there is no historical verification at all, and in Rousseau or George there is not enough of it. A work of this kind is sure to be unscientific; and what is worse, it is

almost equally sure to be pernicious in its practical influence.

We are sometimes told that these imaginative works of sociology bear the same relation to politics that the historical novel does to history. This may be true if we look at them solely from the standpoint of literary art. But if we judge from their moral effect upon the reader the parallel fails. Reader and author both know that the historical novel is not true. It does not pretend to be true. No one is in danger of mistaking "Quentin Durward" or "Henry Esmond" for actual histories of the time with which they deal. With the writings of political theorists it is far otherwise. The line between the picture of an actual state and the picture of a possible state is not a very clear one. The reader of Rousseau or George hardly knows when he passes from a description of real evils and abuses to a description of imaginary remedies. The greater the ability with which such a work is written the greater is the danger of confusion. The author as well as the reader is excited by the exercise of imaginative power. Bellamy is said to have written "Looking Backward" as a work of fiction

pure and simple; but when his readers began to regard him in the light of a prophet, there was an irresistible temptation for the author to regard himself in the same way.

If a man can write literature at all, the construction of a work of political imagination gives him a fatally easy chance to act as a leader of men's thoughts. Plato's "Republic" was a far easier work to construct than Aristotle's "Politics." The one required only concentrated thought, the other involved in addition a painstaking use of material. There is the same advantage in facility of construction in the works of Rousseau as compared with those of Turgot. The easily written work is also the one which enjoys more readers and which has more influence, at least during the writer's lifetime. George's "Progress and Poverty" was not based on an investigation into the history of land tenure. He was therefore able in good faith to promise his readers the millennium if certain schemes of social reform were adopted; and readers anxious for the millennium were enthusiastic over the book. Wagner, in his "Foundations of Political Economy," unfortunately not translated into English, made a

scrupulous investigation of those historical points which George had overlooked, and he was therefore unable to promise his readers the millennium. The consequence is that where Wagner counts one disciple George counts a thousand. Of the ultimate disappointment and evil which result when we trust ourselves to unhistorical theories of politics it is hardly necessary to speak. The work of political imagination may have the same artistic character as the historical novel, but it has a baneful practical influence which makes it, from the moralist's standpoint, an illegitimate use of artistic resources.

It is not in his choice of subject matter, but in the form of his conclusions, that the work of the sociologist differs from that of the writer of history. The man who aims at specific explanations, however widespread, is an historian ; the man who is occupied with verifying generalizations, however narrow, is a sociologist. Bryce's "American Commonwealth" is essentially a work of history. That he deals with a set of contemporary events instead of successive ones is an accident of his subject. He has taken a cross section of history, instead of a longitudinal

section, because American political events are better understood by looking at them in the former way than in the latter. On the other hand, Bagehot's "English Constitution," though very similar to Bryce's "American Commonwealth" in its subject and in its external arrangement, is predominantly a sociological work; and the same thing may be said yet more unreservedly of Burke's "Reflections on the Revolution in France." To Bagehot and to Burke, the understanding of English or French politics was not an end; it was rather an incident in the discovery and application of those profounder laws which regulate the politics of every nation.

The use of the name "sociology" to designate investigations of this kind dates from Auguste Comte; its widespread popular acceptance, which makes it necessary for us to use it whether we like it or not, results chiefly from the influence of Herbert Spencer. Many students of political theory regard the term as an unfortunate one; and I am inclined to think that we shall understand the real scope of our subject better if we use the word sociology only under protest. This is not because it is bad Latin, — though it *is* very bad

Latin indeed, — but because it has prevented the use of a much better term, *ethics*, the science of customs and morals. The effect of calling our subject sociology instead of ethics has been bad, both on the students of morals and on the students of society. It has caused the students of morals to follow old methods and to make their science predominantly a deductive rather than an empirical one. Instead of availing themselves of the results of history and making a social study of those laws of conduct which are essentially social phenomena, they have continued, like their fathers, to make it a branch of psychology. Meantime it has caused the professed students of sociology to go too far in the other direction; to neglect the help which they can get from wide-awake psychologists like Mark Baldwin, whose "Social and Ethical Interpretations in Mental Development" is really a profound contribution to political study, and to occupy themselves far more with classifying things which they see from the outside, than with explaining those which they get from the inside. Among people who have but a slight knowledge of the methods and purposes of political science,

there is a tendency to apply the name "sociology" to every description of the actions of men in society, whether scientific or not. The story of a public bath-house, the collection of a few wage statistics, or the scheme for a new method of measuring criminals are all described as studies in sociology; and the observer, who has perhaps collected a little material for the future historian, is deluded by the high-sounding name into the belief that he has done more truly scientific work than Gibbon or Mill. Nor do the really scientific sociologists wholly escape the baleful influence of a name which tends to separate their field so widely from that of the moralists. It leads them to make their science a branch of anthropology; to deal with men chiefly in masses; to give disproportionate importance to the study of prehistoric races just because they are so readily looked at in this way. Even if, like Bastian or Giddings, we give just importance to the development of mental processes, as distinct from physical ones, we are prone to begin at a point so remote from our own that we are unable to test the correctness of our descriptions.

Thus it has come to pass that there is in

the popular mind not only a separation but an antithesis between ethics, which deals with the profounder instincts derived from our consciousness, and the various branches of sociology, — law, economics, politics, — whose study and whose precepts are empirical. This way of looking at things is fundamentally wrong. All good sociological work has a profoundly ethical character. Aristotle, Hobbes, Rousseau, Blackstone, Adam Smith, not to mention a score of scarcely less distinguished writers, obtained their hold upon the public by the light which they threw upon ethical difficulties and moral problems. Their sociological work has sometimes been based on good ethics and sometimes on bad ethics; in fact, its ethics has generally been good or bad according to the greater or less completeness of the historical study which has preceded it. But some powerful ethical reasoning it has contained and must contain in order to secure a hold on mankind. It must explain men's mental and moral attitude toward each other. Sociology is ethics, and ethics is sociology. The apparent opposition between the two is the result of deductive scientific methods on one side or the other.

We have now defined the limits of our subject. We are seeking to gain a general view of that literature which is based upon history, expresses its conclusions in general laws, and seeks to explain men's moral conduct as members of society. The successful investigations in this field fall under three groups: law, economics, and politics. The first seeks to explain, criticise, and justify the judicial relations of mankind as determined by the necessities of public security; the second their commercial relations as determined by the necessities of business; while the third, as yet in its infancy, attempts to consider their political and moral relations as members of a civil society in whose government they have a share.

The principles of law were of course formulated at a very early period. First we have codes of procedure, like the Twelve Tables of Rome; then we have formal rules of conduct which will be enforced by the civil authority; still later we have judicial decisions and legal text-books indicating the methods in which these traditional rules are applied to new cases. But none of these is literature. Legal literature, in the broader

sense, may be said to begin when we endeavor to explain the relations between the rules of law and the principles of natural justice accepted by the conscience of the community. The two greatest modern works of law, Blackstone's "Commentaries" in England and Savigny's "System of the Roman Law of To-day" in Germany, both owe their power to this underlying idea. Not that it is obtruded upon the reader, but that it is held in reserve as a vivifying force. Blackstone is distinguished from "Coke upon Littleton," not in being a greater legal authority, — for, technically speaking, "Coke upon Littleton" is legal authority while Blackstone is not, — but because Blackstone wrote a work for the public and not for the lawyers; a work which put all English-speaking gentlemen in touch with the common law, and made it, not an instrument of professional success, but a part of the reader's life. The ethical character manifest in Blackstone's writings is from the necessity of the case even more saliently developed in the works of the international lawyers, and most of all in their great leader Grotius. For international law rests not

upon the authority of a superior who has the physical force to make his commands respected, but on the common sense and common consent of the parties in interest. A treatise on international law is therefore in the highest sense a treatise on ethics, — ethics put to the test of practice, and verified or rejected by history.

But profound as is the harmony between law and justice in civilized nations, the occasional dissonance is on that ground all the more marked. These dissonances have therefore occupied a large attention among those who studied the relations between law and ethics. What gives authority to certain principles which we call law, more or less independent of those other principles which we call justice? It was Hobbes who, in his "Leviathan," first undertook a systematic answer to this question, and developed the theory of the social compact which, for good or ill, has formed the subject of so many political controversies. According to Hobbes, a state of nature is for mankind a state of anarchy. To avoid the intolerable evils of this condition, governments have been established for the purpose of giving

security. As long as a government does, in fact, give such security, it performs its part of the compact under which it was established; and its subjects, as representatives of the other party to such a compact, are bound to obey its ordinances. The evils of anarchy were, in Hobbes's view, so great that no approximation to the enforcement of justice could be obtained except under such a surrender of personal rights and opinions as was implied in his fiction of the social compact.

In the hands of Hobbes this doctrine was a conservative force. It justified men in keeping quiet under evils against which their moral sense would otherwise have led them to revolt. But in the century following Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau made a use of the social compact theory of which its author never dreamed, — a use which made it not a conservative but a revolutionary power, — a use which reintroduced into politics and into law those discussions of natural justice which it had been Hobbes's aim to exclude. For Rousseau denied emphatically that the government had fulfilled its part of the contract with the people when it simply

maintained a state of public security. It was not enough to govern, it must govern well; it must not merely repress positive disorder, but promote that justice and that happiness which the collective public opinion of the community demanded. The government, as Rousseau regarded it, was a trustee for the people, pledged and required to pursue popular happiness, and forfeiting its trust the moment it used it for any other purpose. It was on these views of Locke and Rousseau that the authors of the Declaration of Independence based their political doctrines. It was on these views that the French Revolution was founded, and in the exaggeration of these views that its excesses were committed.

But just at the time when this idea of the social compact was most widely influential in practice, it received its deathblow as a theory. With marvelously acute analysis, Bentham, in his "Fragment on Government," proved that there was neither historically nor logically any such thing as a social compact. Government, according to Bentham, derives its authority, not from an ancient promise to give public security, nor from

a long standing trusteeship in behalf of the people, but from the habitual obedience of its subjects. Where such habitual obedience exists, there is government. The accredited acts of such a government are lawful, whether they conform to the ideas of natural justice in any individual case or not. If these acts are habitually contrary to the people's sense of justice, discontent will culminate in revolution, and then the government will be changed so that another authority and another set of laws will come into being. But the second government, like the first, derives its authority from the fact of being able to exercise its power. Any rights which Hobbes might deduce from a supposed agreement by which it was brought into being, or any limitations on its authority which Rousseau might deduce from a similar hypothesis, are both alike fictitious.

Such was the ground taken by Bentham; and he has been followed by almost all English and American writers who deal with law from a professional standpoint. But there has very recently been a tendency to react from this extreme view and to take a middle ground between the position of

Bentham and Hobbes. For while it is undoubtedly true that people habitually obey a government, and that its authority is in fact based on this habitual obedience, it is also true that they obey cheerfully only within certain limits set by public opinion, and that beyond those limits they defeat the governmental authority, not by a revolution, but by the quieter process of nullification. The same habit which establishes the government establishes bounds within which it regards the authority of that government as salutary, and beyond which it will not encourage or even allow the government to go. This view was foreshadowed by Burke in some of the noblest of his political orations. It was applied historically by Sir Henry Maine in his studies of Indian village communities. It has received vigorous support from Herbert Spencer in his brilliant collection of essays, "The Man versus the State." In America, where the extreme views of Bentham have never enjoyed the unquestioned authority which they possessed in England, even professional lawyers like Abbott Lawrence Lowell have developed theories of law and government based on this

view. It only remains for some man of genius to summarize the conclusions of these scattered works, and to develop a theory of the relations between law and justice which shall do for the students of our day what Aristotle did for those of two thousand years ago.

The study of economics, or principles of commerce, began much later than the study of law. The recognition of the ethical character of governments antedated by at least two thousand years the recognition of the ethical character of commerce. Those who look at business operations from the outside, as most of the early writers did, regard them as presumably immoral; as bearing the same relations to the principles of justice which the thief bears to the policeman. Aristotle, Cicero, Aquinas, are all actuated by this idea. It was reserved for Adam Smith to develop a philosophy of business which was in the highest and best sense of the word a moral philosophy. There have been a good many needless inquiries as to the reasons which make the "Wealth of Nations" superior in merit and influence to the many other acute economic

writings in the latter part of the last century. The answer to these inquiries is a simple one. It was because Smith presented clearly to the reader the essentially moral character of business under modern conditions. His predecessors had generally thought of trade as a bargain, as a contest between buyer and seller, where the more skillful and more unscrupulous party gained the advantage over the other. Smith showed how under free competition the self-interest of the several parties, intelligently pursued, conduced to the highest advantage of the community. Did high prices prevail? It was a symptom of scarcity. If we forbade the seller to take advantage of that scarcity, we perpetuated the evil. If, on the other hand, we invited other sellers to compete with him, we directed the industrial forces of the community to the point where they are most needed; we relieved the scarcity of which the high price is but a symptom, and at comparatively small expense to society effected a lasting cure. There is not time to develop this theory of Smith's in all its varied applications, or to show how, under the marvelous adjustments of modern business, price tends

to adjust itself to cost, and cost to be reduced to such a degree as to give the various members of the community the maximum of utility with the minimum of sacrifice. That Smith saw this truth, was his fundamental merit. That he was the first to see it in anything like its full scope, that he had the power to verify it, the candor to recognize its limits, the vigorous English in which to communicate his ideas to others, are facts which give the "Wealth of Nations" the place it deservedly holds in science and in literature. Not in economic science only, but in the whole field of morals have we learned from Adam Smith to expect a harmony of interests between the enlightened self-interest of the individual and the public needs of the community. The fact that the completeness of this harmony has been exaggerated by subsequent writers does not detract from the merit of its discoverer, but rather is a testimony to his power.

Of course Smith's economic principles were widely called in question and vigorously debated. Some rejected his views altogether. Out of this rejection came the socialist controversy. Others held that his

principles of commerce were true as between individuals, but not as between nations; that in the latter case we necessarily had a bargain and a contest rather than a competition, a conflict of interests rather than a harmony. Out of this grew the protectionist controversy. The whole problem of protection is so interwoven with difficult points in the theory of taxation that the best discussion of the subject is often highly technical, and scarcely belongs to the domain of literature. But it would be wrong, in the city of Philadelphia, to give a review of economic writing which should pass over in silence the honored name of Henry C. Carey, who alone, perhaps, among protectionist writers meets the points of Adam Smith with a moral purpose not less profound than that of his opponent.

The socialist controversy belongs in far larger degree to the domain of literature. For half a century succeeding Adam Smith the benefits of increased competition were so great that all classes joined in demanding the removal of barriers against trade. But by the middle of the nineteenth century it had become quite evident that universal

happiness was not to be obtained in this way. Under the influence of Malthus many of the professed economists said that it was useless to strive in that direction; that with an increase of population misery must be the lot of the larger part of mankind. Such views aroused a reaction against commercialism. The literature of this reaction falls into two groups, — that of the Christian or conservative socialists, represented in English by Carlyle, Kingsley, and Ruskin, and that of the social democracy, whose great leaders in literature as well as in politics were Lassalle and Marx. The work of the Christian socialists has given us some charming examples of literary art. For the most part, however, the history of this school illustrates the danger of attempts to write on sociology without the necessary historical study. When it came to practical questions the Christian socialists as a body were found on the side of the slaveholder and the tyrant. Actual progress in emancipation came from the cautious and somewhat pessimistic student like Mill or Bright, who saw the difficulties in the way of reform, rather than from the man to whom impatience

seemed a virtue and idealism a substitute for history.

Lassalle and Marx deserve far more attention. Lassalle's works have not been translated into English, and those of Marx are too voluminous and too abstruse for the general reader; but a good account of their character and influence can be found in Rae's "Contemporary Socialism." Lassalle was primarily a student of history, Marx a critic of actual business conditions. Lassalle thought that he discovered a law of historical evolution by which the control of business was moving farther and farther down among the masses of the people. Adam Smith's work represented to him a period of transition from a narrower to a broader economy. It had the merit of taking business out of the hands of the privileged classes. It had the demerit of incompleteness, in that it left it in the hands of the property-owners. The evils of this incomplete work were accentuated — and overaccentuated — by Lassalle and Marx and their followers. Starting from the Aristotelian dogma that value is based on labor, Marx showed that the laborer did not get at pre-

sent all the product, but only a part of it; and he held that the other part, kept back from the laborer, represented legalized robbery.

Of the great ability of these writers and of their importance in the world's literature there can be no doubt. In intellectual brilliancy they were probably superior to their greatest contemporary among the defenders of the existing order, — John Stuart Mill. Their failure was the result of a faulty method. Instead of starting from historical facts and working out towards explanations, they started with a principle of deductive ethics, that labor was necessarily the source of value. It was not in intellectual acuteness that they failed by comparison with Adam Smith, but in the intrinsic weakness of purely deductive methods for dealing with social phenomena. And it was just by knowing when to abandon these methods that John Stuart Mill succeeded. It is the fashion nowadays to criticise Mill's economic writings unsparingly, to say that he carried nothing out to its logical conclusion, that he used neither the relentless logic of the last century nor the Darwinian meth-

ods of the present. Yet Mill was greater than his critics. He had a profound conception of the importance of his subject in its moral aspects. He had a wide knowledge of facts. He had infinite industry in testing those facts. The very incompleteness of his conclusions, which has been made a subject of complaint against him, was the result of that candor which would not allow him to deal unscrupulously with facts that interfered with his theories. Great in the sense of Adam Smith he probably was not, at any rate as an economist, for he developed no new truths of wide-reaching importance. His work was not a work of seed-time, but a work of harvest. It was his to gather and store for use the fruit which Adam Smith had sown.

But the middle of the nineteenth century witnessed the beginnings of a political science wider than the study of law or the study of economics. Men's minds were no longer satisfied with analyzing the relations between law and justice or between commerce and justice. They demanded to know what was that justice itself, and who made it. The Catholic theory that it was made by the

Church, and the Protestant theory that each man made it for himself, were found to be equally inadequate for explaining historical events. We needed a broader science of politics, which should explain the social structure and the public opinion which held it together, — the political entity, of which law was but one manifestation and business another.

The problem was not a new one. Men had tried to solve it in all ages; and at least four attempts had been made which possessed great merit, whether viewed from the standpoint of scientific care, of literary form, or of practical influence. These were the "Politics" of Aristotle, at the culmination of Greek thought; the "Republic" of Jean Bodin, at the close of the Middle Ages; the "Spirit of the Laws" of Montesquieu, in the literary movement which preceded the French Revolution, and the "Philosophy of History and Law" of Hegel. It was the method of analysis which was new. The Darwinian theory, with its doctrine of survival and elimination, gave us a means of explaining political evolution which our ancestors had not possessed. Crude as were the first efforts in

its application, and incomplete as are the results even now attained, it represents a new power in political and moral study. In one sense it was not really new; for orators like Burke and Webster and Lincoln were applying to the problems of practical statesmanship those conceptions of evolution and struggle and survival which we associate with the name of Darwin. But the growth of the modern science of biology has had a profound influence on the science and literature of politics; and those ideas which a century or even a half century ago were but the occasional inspirations of our men of genius, are now being systematized and developed in all directions. They form the background of books like Kidd's "Social Evolution" or Fiske's "Destiny of Man;" they are reflected in almost every page of the political essays of John Morley; they are made the basis of scientific studies as diverse as those of Spencer, Giddings, and — best of all — Bagehot, whose "Physics and Politics" perhaps represent the high-water mark of constructive attainment in this field of literary and scientific activity. Not that Bagehot's work is in any sense final; the great book

to which future generations shall refer as marking an epoch in this progress remains yet to be written.

But though we cannot yet point to any such culminating achievement, we can indicate with much precision the fundamental ideas which modern political science is following, — the lines of development —

> "Where thought on thought is piled till some vast mass
> Shall loosen, and the nations echo round."

The first of these fundamental ideas is that of race character. Each social group — horde, tribe, or nation — has its type of personal development. The habits of the race limit the activity of the individual. Institutions, religions, philosophies of life and conduct, are but the expressions of this race type. This is what is really meant by saying that society is an organism. The men who first made this expression popular, like Spencer, tended to carry too far this analogy to a biological organism, and to study the processes of social nutrition rather than those of social psychology. But this error is largely a thing of the past. The success of a book like Kidd's "Social Evolution," in spite of the vagueness or crudeness of many

of its parts, shows how eagerly people are looking for a science which shall lay stress on explaining their beliefs and moral characteristics rather than their visible organization.

A second fundamental idea is that this race character is but the record of the past history of the people; embodying itself in habits of action which are a second nature to the individuals that compose it. "In every man," says Morley, "the substantial foundations of action consist of the accumulated layers, which various generations of ancestors have placed for him. The greater part of our sentiments act most effectively when they act most mechanically." Or to quote the noble passage in Burke which suggested this utterance of Morley: "We are afraid to put men to live and trade each on his own private stock of reason, because we suspect that this stock in each man is small, and that the individuals would do better to avail themselves of the general bank and capital of nations and of ages. Many of our men of speculation, instead of exploding general prejudices, employ their sagacity to discover the latent wisdom which prevails in them.

If they find what they seek, and they seldom fail, they think it more wise to continue the prejudice with the reason involved, than to cast away the coat of prejudice, and to leave nothing but the naked reason: because prejudice with its reason has a motive to give action to that reason, and an affection which will give it permanence. . . . Prejudice renders a man's virtue his habit, and not a series of unconnected acts."

A third idea following closely upon the second is that these habits of mind have been given their shape in a struggle for existence between different races, no less severe than that which prevails among the lower animals; only this human struggle is chiefly a conflict between ethical types rather than physiological ones, and stamps its verdict of fitness or unfitness upon moral characteristics rather than physical structures. This is where the work of Darwin has given the modern investigator his greatest advantage. There were writers prior to Darwin who, like Hegel, were just as completely possessed of the idea of evolution as Spencer or Bagehot; but Hegel and every other political writer who preceded Darwin found it

hard to get, outside of his own consciousness, either a test of fitness or a compelling force which should make for progress. To the Darwinian this is easy. Here are two tribes, with different standards of morality. One standard preserves the race which holds it, and is therefore self-perpetuating; the other has the reverse effect, and is therefore self-destructive. The process of elimination by natural selection does its work and registers its verdict.

But the race characteristics which contributed to success in one age or state of civilization may not be equally successful in a later age or more advanced state. The race which would be permanently successful must have the means of adapting itself to new conditions. A really permanent system of morals must provide for progress as well as discipline, for flexibility to meet future conditions as well as firmness to deal with present ones. How is the combination to be secured? The answer to this question gives us the modern doctrine of liberty, as developed by Mill and his followers. This represents the fourth and greatest of the ideas of modern social philosophy, which can be

applied to almost every department of human activity — commercial freedom, religious toleration, or constitutional government. We cannot better close our survey of political literature than by availing ourself of John Morley's unrivaled powers of statement in summarizing this great principle.

"We may best estimate the worth and the significance of the doctrine of Liberty by considering the line of thought and observation which led to it. To begin with, it is in Mr. Mill's hands something quite different from the same doctrine as preached by the French revolutionary school; indeed, one might even call it reactionary, in respect of the French theory of a hundred years back. It reposes on no principle of abstract right, but, like the rest of its author's opinions, on principles of utility and experience.

"There are many people who believe that if you only make the ruling body big enough, it is sure to be either very wise itself, or very eager to choose wise leaders. Mr. Mill, as any one who is familiar with his writings is well aware, did not hold this opinion. He had no more partiality for mob rule than De Maistre or Goethe or Mr. Car-

lyle. He saw its evils more clearly than any of these eminent men, because he had a more scientific eye, and because he had had the invaluable training of a political administrator on a large scale, and in a very responsible post. But he did not content himself with seeing these evils, and he wasted no energy in passionate denunciation of them, which he knew must prove futile. . . . Mr. Carlyle, and one or two rhetorical imitators, poured malediction on the many-headed populace, and with a rather pitiful impatience insisted that the only hope for men lay in their finding and obeying a strong man, a king, a hero, a dictator. How he was to be found, neither the master nor his still angrier and more impatient mimics could ever tell us.

"Now Mr. Mill's doctrine laid down the main condition of finding your hero; namely, that all ways should be left open to him, because no man, nor the majority of men, could possibly tell by which of these ways their deliverers were from time to time destined to present themselves. Wits have caricatured all this, by asking us whether by encouraging the tares to grow, you give the

wheat a better chance. This is as misleading as such metaphors usually are. The doctrine of liberty rests on a faith drawn from the observation of human progress, that though we know wheat to be serviceable and tares to be worthless, yet there are in the great seed-plot of human nature a thousand rudimentary germs, not wheat and not tares, of whose properties we have not had a fair opportunity of assuring ourselves. If you are too eager to pluck up the tares, you are very likely to pluck up with them these untried possibilities of human excellence, and you are, moreover, very likely to injure the growing wheat as well. The demonstration of this lies in the recorded experience of mankind."

THE STUDY OF FICTION

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THE STUDY OF FICTION

MANY of us can remember a time — and a time not so very remote — when we would have scouted as an arrant absurdity any suggestion that literature was to be studied. Without giving thought to the question, we held it blindly as an article of faith that literature was for enjoyment only and for refreshment; and we may even have had a vague feeling that it was not quite solid enough to be matter for study, — that it was, in fact, too entertaining to be taken seriously. If we chanced to recall De Quincey's suggestive distinction between the literature of knowledge and the literature of power, we might have admitted that the works belonging to the literature of knowledge, — history, for example, and biography, — might well be read with a desire for self-improvement; but as for the books belonging to the literature of power, — poetry and the drama, romance and the essay, —

these were for recreation and for pleasure. They were no more to be studied than a sunset or a rainbow or a woman's face or anything else that is beautiful and variable.

But of late a change has come over us, and the scales have fallen from our eyes. Just as we are inquiring into the phenomena of the sunset and the rainbow, and just as we are classifying the types of female beauty, so also are we analyzing poetry, lyric and epic and tragic, and investigating the conditions of the essay and of the romance. The ballad serves as a basis for research, and so likewise does the short story. A lilting legend still gives us joy, no doubt, but our delight is no longer unalloyed. It was Froissart who said that our sturdy English ancestors took their pleasure sadly; and if there were to-day to arrive among us an observer as acute and as sympathetic as the old chronicler, he might record that now we take our pleasure curiously, dissecting our emotions and seeking always to discover the final cause of our amusement.

Sometimes one or another of us may be led to wonder whether this later attitude is altogether satisfactory, and whether the new

theory is not held a little too rigorously. There is something lacking more often than not in our effort to find a scientific foundation for our artistic appreciation, and the attempt itself may even tend to lessen our enjoyment. We have all seen editions of the masterpieces of poetry in which notes have sprung up so luxuriantly as to threaten to choke the life out of the unfortunate lyrist. Diagrams have even been devised to explain the mystery of the plays which plain people were once able to enjoy unthinkingly in the theatre, a place where the task of the commentator is necessarily superfluous.

Instead of centring its attention on the fructifying kernel, much of the so-called teaching of literature to-day has to do chiefly with barren husks, with the mere dates of authors' biographies, and with the external facts of literary annals. When I see that pedants and pedagogues are cramming Milton's lesser lyrics and Shakespeare's sylvan dramas down the unwilling throats of green boys and girls, I cannot but rejoice that my own school-days were past long before these newer methods were adopted.

Indeed, I think myself fortunate that I had never studied literature until I was most unexpectedly called upon to teach it. I had read freely for the fun of it, finding the labor its own reward, or rather not finding it labor at all; and I had been led to look up the lives of the authors whose works interested me, and to compare one with another; but as for any formal study of literature, I hardly knew that such a thing was practiced by any one.

Yet I can see now, as I look back at my own haphazard reading, that I might have been saved much time, and that my enjoyment in literature, keen as it always was, might have been sharpened, if I had had some guide to show me the lines along which the drama and the novel had developed, and to suggest to me the interesting relationships of the different literary forms, — a guide who could supply me with reasons for the preferences I had dumbly felt, and who might even aid me to combine these preferences into an æsthetic theory of my own, or who could at least help me to discover for myself the principles underlying my preferences. Useful as such a guide

would be in considering the essay, for instance, the history of which has not yet been thoroughly worked out, in no department of literature would he be more useful than in the broad field of fiction; first, because the field is so very broad and so sharply diversified, and, secondly, because the novel is still so young that there is hardly yet a tradition of criticism to aid us in the necessary classification.

I

This youth of the novel, as compared with the drama, for example, with oratory, with lyric poetry, must ever be borne in mind. There were nine muses of old in Greece, but to no one of them was committed the care of the novel, since the making of a fictitious tale in prose had not yet occurred to any of the Greek men of letters. It is easy for us to see now that it is a mere accident whether a story be told in verse or in prose, and that therefore the earliest of all romances of adventure is the Odyssey, the bold and crafty Ulysses being thus the legitimate ancestor of Gil Blas the unscrupulous and of d'Artagnan the invulnerable. The

art of the story-teller is ancient and honorable; but prose lags long after verse; and when our remote progenitor, the cave-dweller, anticipated the Athenian in liking to hear and to tell some new thing, it was in rhythm that he told it, though it might be only his own boastful autobiography. Even after the revival of letters, when Boccaccio and Chaucer rivaled one another in delicate perfection of narrative art, the Englishman often chose verse to tell the self-same story for which the Italian had preferred prose, and it was the unrhythmic "Vicar of Wakefield" which suggested the metrical "Hermann and Dorothea," just as the still earlier "Daphnis and Chloe" in prose may have been in some measure the model of the later "Evangeline" in verse.

The modern novel in prose may almost be called a creature of the nineteenth century. In many of its developments it is a thing of yesterday, and we do not yet quite know how to take it. Even now distinctions as essential as that between the novel and the romance and that between the novel and the short story are imperfectly seized by many of those who discuss the art of fiction.

I was about to declare that the novel is like a younger brother who has gone forth to make his way in the world, and who has returned at last wealthier by far than any of his elders who have lived leisurely by the family hearth. But this figure limps a little; indeed, I must confess that it is both inadequate and inaccurate. The novel is rather the heir of the ages, rich not only with the fortune of his father, but having received also legacies from various elderly relatives, old maids most of them. The novel has taken the heritage of the epic, and it is engaged in a hot dispute with the serious drama for the possession of what little property moribund tragedy may have to bequeath. It has even despoiled the essay of the character sketch, and it has laid violent hands on the fountain of personal emotion formerly the sole property of the lyric. Not content with thus robbing poetry and the drama, the novel vaunts itself as a rival of history in recording the great deeds of the past; and it also claims the right to wield the weapons of oratory in discussing the burning questions of the present. In fact, fiction at the end of the nineteenth century may be likened to

Napoleon at the very height of his power, when no other monarch could make sure of resting in peace upon the throne of his fathers.

This is perhaps the most striking fact in the history of the literature of the nineteenth century, — this immense vogue of the novel and of the short story. Fiction fills our monthly magazines, and it is piled high on the counters of our bookstores. Dr. Holmes once said that during the Civil War the cry of the American populace was for "bread and the newspapers." It would be an exaggeration, of course, to say that during periods of peace the cry of the fairer half of our population is for "clothes and the novel," but it is an exaggeration only; it is not a misrepresentation. Almost every year brings forth a story which has the surprising sale of a quarter of a million copies or more, while it is only once in a lifetime that a work in any other department of literature achieves so wide a circulation. Of late years there has been only one Grant's "Personal Memoirs" to set off against a score of stories like "Called Back," like "Mr. Barnes of New York," like "Trilby;" and the sale of the great leader's

autobiography has not been the half of that of a novel written by one of the generals who served under him. In the past quarter of a century no essay in political economy (with the possible exception of "Progress and Poverty") has really rivaled the circulation attained by "Looking Backward;" and no theological treatise (with the possible exception of "The Greatest Thing in the World") has had a tithe of the readers "Robert Elsmere" had.

It was a primitive Scotchman who wanted to write the songs of a nation rather than its laws; and even in our more advanced civilization we can understand the wish, although it is perhaps easier for us Americans to be proud of the Constitution of the United States merely as literature than of "Yankee Doodle" or of the "Star Spangled Banner." But in these days when few know how to sing and all know how to read, the story may be more potent than the lyric. When Mrs. Stowe visited the White House, Lincoln bent over her, saying, "And is this the little woman who made this big war?" A few years later the Tsar told Turgenef that the freeing of the serfs was the result of thoughts

aroused in the autocrat of Russia by the reading of the novelist's story.

No doubt the effect of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" has been equaled only by that of the "Memoirs of a Sportsman." But the influence of many another novel has been both wide and deep. The fiction which abides has been patterned after life, and in its turn it serves as a model to the living men and women who receive it eagerly. The shabby heroes of Balzac found many imitators in Paris in the middle of this century, just as the rakish heroes of Byron had found many imitators in London at the beginning of the century. The interaction of life on literature, and of literature again on life, is one of the most interesting of phenomena for the student of social development; and its importance is seen more clearly since the French psychologist, M. Tarde, has formulated what he terms the Law of Imitation, and since he has revealed how immense and how far-reaching is the force of an example placed conspicuously before men's eyes as a model. Plainer than ever before is the duty of the novelist now to set up no false ideals, to erect no impossible standards of strength

or courage or virtue, to tell the truth about life as he sees it with his own eyes.

II

There are various ways in which the study of fiction may be approached. We may consider chiefly the contents of the book, its pictures of life and of manners, its disclosure of human characteristics and of national peculiarities; we may devote our attention rather to the form in which the story is cast, the way it is told, the methods of the narrator; or we may enlarge our views to cover the history of the art of fiction as it slowly broadens down from precedent to precedent, recording carefully the birth of every new species. In the first case we should find a fertile field of inquiry if we sought to test the fullness and the accuracy with which race-characteristics are recorded in the fiction of a language, — how the energy and the humor of the Anglo-Saxon stock dominate the novels of the English language; how the logic and the clearness and the wit of the French people are represented in French fiction; and how the diffuseness, the dreaminess, and the sentimentality of the Germans characterize German

romance. In the second case there would be instructive matter for comparison in setting side by side the mock epic style of Fielding, the confidential attitude of Sterne and Thackeray, and the impassive manner of Flaubert and Maupassant. And in the third case we should find ourselves facing many interesting questions: Who invented the detective story? Who wrote the first sea tale? What is the earliest novel with a purpose? What is the origin of the historical novel? Who first made use of the landscape and of the weather as sustaining accompaniments of a story? How and when has the fiction of the English language been influenced by the fiction of the Italian, the Spanish, and the French? And how and when has it in turn affected the story telling of other tongues? How far are the range and the precision of the modern novel due to these indefatigable international rivalries and to the interaction of various literatures one on the other?

Of these three ways of approach, perhaps the most satisfactory is the third, the historical, for it can easily be made to yield most of the advantages of the others. No one has yet written an adequate history of the devel-

opment of the modern novel; but the material for an analysis of this most interesting evolution is abundant and accessible. Starting with the often ill-told and empty anecdotes of the "Gesta Romanorum," on the one hand, and on the other with the high-flown and impossible romances of chivalry, both of them frankly unreadable to-day, we can see how in Italy the former supplied the seed for the fully ripe tales of the "Decameron," and how in Spain the latter suggested by reaction the low-life narratives, those rambling autobiographies of thieves and beggars, which are known as the "picaresque romances," and which served as a model for "Gil Blas." We can trace for ourselves the steps whereby the simplified figures of Boccaccio — mere masks of a priest, a husband, a wife, for instance, labeled rather than individualized, existing solely for the sake of the adventures in which they are involved, and moving as though *in vacuo* with no effort to surround themselves with an atmosphere — are succeeded by the more complicated creatures of Le Sage, with their recognizable human weaknesses.

We can note how slow was the growth of

the desire for unity when we remark that masterpieces like "Don Quixote" and "Tom Jones" are both of them dilated and enfeebled by the injection of extraneous stories, supposed to be told by one of the characters and needlessly arresting the flow of the main narrative. We can discover how even today, when the beauty of unity is acknowledged, we have still two contrasting forms, and how a novel may now either be Greek in its simplicity, its swiftness, its directness, as the "Bride of Lammermoor" is, and the "Scarlet Letter," and "Smoke," with the interest centred in one or two or three characters only; or may be Elizabethan rather, with a leisurely amplitude, peopled with many characters, such as we see in the "Heart of Midlothian," in "Vanity Fair," and in "Anna Karenina."

The historical study of fiction affords us an opportunity for interesting investigations into what may be called literary genealogy, — the inquiry as to the exact value of the inheritance each of the novelists received from his immediate predecessors and as to which particular predecessor it was of whom he is the chief heir. Consciously or uncon-

sciously every artist is a debtor to the past. The most original of innovators has made his originality partly out of himself, partly out of what he has appropriated and absorbed from those who practiced his art before him. Only a few of his separate contrivances are his own, and the most he may claim is a patent on the combination. Now, it is not without instruction for us to disentangle the new from the old, and to ascertain whence each of the novelists derived this or that device of which he has made effective use.

Every artist studies in the studio of one or more of his elders, and it is there that he picks up the secrets of his art and receives the precious traditions of the craft. The novice may be absolutely unlike his master. No matter; he must begin by doing what his master tells him, and it is only after he has learnt his trade that he knows enough to try to develop his own individuality. And so we see how it is that the great Michael Angelo was a student under Ghirlandajo, who was not great, and how Botticelli profited by the instruction of Fra Filippo Lippi, who had studied under Masaccio, who had for his

master Masolino; and it is instructive for the student of the history of painting to know also that Giulio Romano was the pupil of Raphael, who was the pupil of Perugino, who was the pupil of Niccolò da Foligno, who was the pupil of Benozzo Gozzoli, who was the pupil of Fra Angelico, who although not a pupil was a follower of Giotto, who was a pupil of Cimabue. Thus, and thus only, can the indispensable technique be passed down from generation to generation, every man handing on the accumulation he has received, increasing it by his own contribution. The young artist is a weakling if he openly robs any single one of his predecessors; he is a dolt if he does not borrow from as many of them as may have the separate qualities he is striving to combine.

The arts are one in reality; and what is true of painting and sculpture and architecture is true also of literature, of prose and verse. For example, there are few men of letters of our time whose prose has been more praised for its freshness and its individuality than the late Robert Louis Stevenson; but his was an originality compounded of many simples. He confessed frankly

that he had sat at the feet of the masters, playing the "sedulous ape" to a dozen or more, and at last slowly learning how to be himself. Again, the verse of Dante Gabriel Rossetti has a note of its own, a note which many younger poets have delighted to echo and reecho; but Rossetti told a friend that the exciting cause of his "Blessed Damozel" was the "Raven" of Edgar Allan Poe, and Poe's own indebtedness to Coleridge is obvious even if it had not been expressly avowed.

In literature as in life, it is a wise child that knows its own father; and the family-tree of fiction is not easy to trace in all its roots and branches. Certain types persist from one generation to another. We have no hesitation in declaring that the author of the "Master of Ballantrae" had for his grandfathers in story-telling the author of "Guy Mannering" and the author of the "Three Musketeers;" and we may even venture to believe that the young Scotchman who wrote "Treasure Island" was a literary nephew of the American who wrote the "Gold Bug" and a great-grand-nephew of the Englishman who wrote "Robinson Cru-

soe." Sometimes we can pick out a novelist who is the remote descendant of a series of international marriages. The Italian Signor Gabriele d' Annunzio, for example, came forward first as a writer of fiction with a story which had obviously been inspired by a study of the psychologic subtleties of the Frenchman, M. Paul Bourget. But M. Bourget's first novel was obviously modeled upon the delicate work of Mr. Henry James, to whom, indeed, it was dedicated as to a master. Now the earlier tales of the American novelist were plainly written under the influence of a Russian, Ivan Turgenef. As a whole, Signor d' Annunzio's writings are very different from M. Bourget's, and M. Bourget's from Mr. James's and Mr. James's from Turgenef's; but none the less the line of filiation is clearly to be perceived. Of course, there is here intended no suggestion of unfair imitation, still less of vulgar plagiarism; the desire is merely to show how each of these accomplished artists in fiction served his apprenticeship in the workshop of an elder craftsman. In literature there are very few self-made men.

As it happens, these four nineteenth-cen-

tury novelists have a strong family likeness; they are of kin spiritually; they are all of them far more interested in the subtle workings of the mind of man than in any overt actions of his body. It would not be difficult, however, to find another group linked together in like manner in which there is marked opposition between the successive authors, the younger availing themselves of the technical devices of their masters, but turning them to totally different uses. For example, no writer of his years has a more vigorous freshness than Mr. Rudyard Kipling; none has shown originality in more diverging lines than he. Yet Mr. Kipling's first Tales from the Indian Hills reveal plainly the strong impression left on his youthful genius by the Californian stories of Mr. Bret Harte, and the style at least of Mr. Bret Harte's earlier stories showed how forcibly he had been affected by Charles Dickens. Now Dickens has recorded that his own earlier sketches were deliberately cast in the mould supplied by Smollett in his robust comic portraitures, and Smollett in the preface of one of his novels has avowed his emulation of Le Sage. But

"Gil Blas" is an adroit arrangement of material from Spanish sources according to the model set by the authors of "Lazarillo de Tormes" and "Guzman de Alfarache," the original picaresque romances. Between these picaresque romances and "Gil Blas" and Smollett's full-blooded and coarse-grained fictions, there are many points of resemblance, but Dickens, even in the rougher farcical tales of his youth, is not to be classed with them; Mr. Bret Harte's work as a whole exhibits no close similarity to Dickens's, and Mr. Rudyard Kipling's as a whole exhibits no likeness at all to either Dickens's or Mr. Bret Harte's.

Sometimes the literary ancestry of an author is mixed, and he is not merely a chip of the old block and not quite the image of his father, but has traits inherited from his mother also and from a dozen other progenitors, maternal and paternal. Mr. Howells is an instance of this felicitous cross-breeding, and he can trace his descent from forefathers as different as Henry Heine and Jane Austen, Turgenef and Tolstoi. Sometimes an author of our time throws back to a remote ancestor; the skeleton of "Huckle-

berry Finn," for example, is loosely articulated like the skeleton of "Gil Blas," although Mark Twain once told me, when I drew his attention to this, that he had absolutely no recollection of Le Sage's story and certainly no predilection for it. The form here is the picaresque form, which has for its hero some humble and hopelessly unheroic figure, before whose wondering eyes more or less of the strange panorama of life is slowly unrolled. From "Gil Blas" to "Huckleberry Finn" the line is long, running through "Roderick Random" and the "Pickwick Papers" and more than one of Marryat's happy-go-lucky narratives. Indeed, the laxly knit tale of this type is likely always to be attractive to the story-teller, as it releases the author from any obligation to construct a logical plot, and as it allows him to utilize immediately any striking situation he may invent or any strange character he may meet.

III

As the only unity the picaresque romance can have is due to the fact that a certain character has been a spectator of the vari-

ous scenes or an actor in the various adventures, this character is generally allowed to tell the story himself, and the tale takes the shape of an autobiography. The autobiography and the history, — these are the two usual methods of communicating to the reader the events in which his interest is to be aroused; either one of the characters tells the tale in the first person or else the author tells it himself in the third person. There are other methods, of course. The story may be cast in the form of a diary kept by one of the characters, recording events from day to day, and revealing in this act his feelings at the moment of making the entry; the method of the contemporaneous autobiography, this might be called, and it has been employed skillfully by Mr. Paul Leicester Ford in his "Story of an Untold Love." Or the author may suppress everything except what his people say to one another, cutting his story down to dialogue only, with but summary indication either of actual action or of unexpressed feeling. This semi-dramatic method has been developed in France of late by half a dozen clever writers, under the lead of the lady who calls herself

"Gyp," and it has been employed by Mr. Rudyard Kipling in the "Story of the Gadsbys." Or certain of the characters may exchange letters, which is a very leisurely way of affording us the information we are seeking. But this method has its advantage, if the centre of interest is not so much in what happened as in how these happenings affected the several actors, — as in Smollett's "Humphrey Clinker," for example, and in Mr. James's "Bundle of Letters," much of the humor of these pleasantries arising from the unconscious self-revelation of different characters in the presence of the same fact. On the other hand, modern readers find it an immense weariness to be forced to go through all the outlying formulas of epistolary art, when the theme itself is emotion pure and simple, — as in Richardson's "Clarissa Harlowe," which is to-day left unread partly because of the intolerable sluggishness of its telling. Wilkie Collins found it profitable elaborately to combine letters and diaries and statements of this character and that, thus keeping up an incessant crossfire of suggestions and suspicions under cover of which the ultimate secret might lie

concealed a little longer. Two young friends of mine, in the wantonness of inventive exuberance, once pieced together a coherent story out of race-cards, play-bills, pawn-tickets, newspaper paragraphs, advertisements, telegrams, and a few letters, without a single line of direct narrative. This ingenuity is well enough once in a way, but in the long run there is no doubt that it is worse than wasted. In the art of the story teller, as in any other art, the less the mere form is flaunted in the eyes of the beholder the better. The simpler the manner of telling the story, the more attention will the reader be able to bestow upon the matter. So we find that the most of the great novels of the world are singularly free from intricacies of composition, and that in them the story is set forth directly either by one of the characters or by the author himself.

Probably the autobiographic form is earlier than the narrative in the third person. As Mr. Kipling once suggested to me, when we were discussing the question, primitive man assumes no modesty, but is frankly vainglorious, rejoicing in his own prowess and delighting to vaunt himself. "I did it," he cries,

"alone I did it, I seized him, I smote him, I slew him, — with my own right hand I slew him!" And even now there is an almost irresistible tendency to boast when a man is talking about himself. Henry Esmond is as modest as he is manly, but we discover that he is aware of his own merits. Barry Lyndon is outrageously self-laudatory, which does not prevent our perceiving that he is an unmitigated scoundrel. In these two masterpieces Thackeray uses the autobiographic form with perfect success; but when he employs Arthur Pendennis to unravel for us the family history of the Newcomes, we cannot but think he is less felicitous. The personality of Pendennis is out of place in the later story, and his presence is distracting; besides, we are compelled to ask ourselves more than once how it is that Pendennis knows all the secrets of the highly respectable family, and we do not enjoy the suspicion that he must have employed detectives or listened at the keyhole.

Nine times out of ten the simplest form is the best, the plain narrative in the third person by the author, who is supposed to be ubiquitous and omniscient, having seen

everything, heard everything, and remembered everything. The modern novelist, Mr. Howells once reminded me, is the direct heir of the epic poet, who knew all things because he was inspired by the muse herself, her aid having been duly invoked at the beginning. The most accomplished artists in fiction are the French, and they very rarely use any but the plain narrative; and this has been preferred also by Turgenef in Russia and by Hawthorne in America, with that unerring instinct which makes them the despair of less gifted story-tellers. Turgenef even managed to endow his plain narrative with some of the advantage of the autobiography, singling out one of his characters, analyzing this one's feelings only, and telling us always how the other characters affected this one.

IV

It may seem to some that I am lingering too long over questions of technique, to which few readers of fiction ever give a thought, being interested in the events of the story, in the people who carry it on, in what is felt and said and done, rather than in the way in which it happens to be told. But a

certain understanding of technique is a first requisite for any adequate appreciation of an art; and the technique of the art of the novelist is now singularly rich and varied and worthy of consideration. In our English-speaking community there is no danger that too much attention will be paid to matters of craftsmanship. In art we tend to be slovens, attaining our aim rather by an excessive expenditure of energy than by adroit husbanding of force. The ordinary British novel is a sprawling invertebrate — not to call it an inorganic conglomerate. Even the works of the British masters are often almost amorphous — the "Mutual Friend" for one and "Middlemarch" for another, both of which disclose an astounding disregard for the principles of composition. "Vanity Fair" has two separate stories arbitrarily conjoined, — the one recording the rise and fall of Becky Sharp and the other dealing with the two wooings of Amelia.

When we turn from technique to theme, from the manner of telling to the matter of the tale, there are many aspects of fiction inviting attention, and there are not a few questions of the hour upon which light can

be thrown by an examination of the novels of the day. For example, there is incessant discussion about the equality of the sexes and about the difference between feminine and masculine ideals; and here instruction can be had by a comparison of the novels written by men with the novels written by women. Apparently what man most admires in woman is charm and submissiveness; and therefore we discover that heroines of men's novels are likely to be both lovely and insipid, and that they are really clever only when they incline towards wickedness, — Amelia on the one hand and on the other Becky Sharp. And seemingly what woman most admires in man is strength and goodness; and therefore we find that the heroes of women's novels tend to be brutes, like Rochester in "Jane Eyre," or to be prigs, like Daniel Deronda. Wholly without intention the writers, men and women both, have disclosed the unformulated and fundamental beliefs of each sex about the other; and the testimony is the stronger from the fact that the witnesses were not aware they were on the stand.

Almost as brisk as this eternal debate between the sexes is the present discussion in

regard to race characteristics, and whether or not, for instance, the civilization of the Anglo-Saxon is really superior to that of the Latin and that of the Slav. Here again fiction may be of invaluable assistance in coming to a wise conclusion. Consider, for example, how the chief qualities of a people are unconsciously disclosed in its novels. Robinson Crusoe is as typically English in his sturdiness and in his religious feeling as the sorrowful Werther is typically German or the light-hearted Manon Lescaut is typically French. Any one who chanced to be familiar with the serious fiction of Spain and America might have forecast the conduct of the recent war between the two countries and foretold the result. Perhaps the salient inconsistency of the Spanish character, the immense chasm between its poetic side and its prosaic, could be seized by the mastery of a single volume, one of the world's greatest books, "Don Quixote." But a casual perusal of two earlier stories, "Lazarillo de Tormes" and "Guzman de Alfarache," now nearly three centuries old, would remind us how deeply rooted are certain of the characteristics of the Spanish race, — on the one hand empty honor, careless cruelty,

besotted superstition, administrative corruption, and on the other, sobriety, uncomplaining industry, and cheerful courage. These same characteristics are discoverable also in the later novels of Valdes and Perez Galdos, although not quite so brutally displayed. And as to America, whoever had read and understood the recent serious fiction of the United States, the "Rise of Silas Lapham" and the "Hazard of New Fortunes," the stories of Mr. Hamlin Garland and Mr. Owen Wister, the tales of Miss Wilkins and of Octave Thanet, might have sized up us Americans and might have made a pretty good guess at the way a war once entered upon would bring out the energy of the race, the tenacity, the resolution, the ingenuity, — and even the good-humored and easy-going toleration which is perhaps our chief defect as a people and which is responsible in some measure for the preventable sufferings of our sick soldiers.

V

I said that a reader of the serious fiction of the two countries might have forecast the result of the war; and by serious fiction I meant what is often called realistic fiction, the

fiction in which the author has tried to tell the truth about life as he sees it. I doubt whether any valid deduction whatever could have been made by a reader of romantic fiction, the fiction in which the author feels himself at liberty to dress up the facts of life to suit his market or to delight his caprice. The romantic fictions are more exciting than the veritistic; surprise follows surprise, and so-called effects are heaped one on the other. Life as we all know it, with its commonplace duties, seems drear and gray after these excursions into fairyland with impossible heroes who face impossible perils with impossible fortitude. But story-telling of this sort is as dangerous as any other departure from the truth; and if it "takes us out of ourselves," as the phrase is, if it supplies the "anodyne of dreams," as a British critic calls it, we had best remember that the morphine habit once acquired is not readily relinquished. If a young lady likes to make her luncheon on chocolate éclairs, it is not for us to interfere with her selection, but we may have our own opinion as to the wholesomeness of the repast and as to the nourishment it provides.

The purpose of the novel, as of all litera-

ture, indeed, is partly to amuse, to delight, to relieve. At a certain stage of mental development we are most amused by the unnatural and by the supernatural. As we grow to man's estate we are likely to discover that life itself offers the most interesting outlook to us, and that the fiction which most refreshes us is that which best interprets for us life as we know it. The boy in us, it may be, — the boy that survives more or less in every man who ever had a boyhood of his own, — the boy in us has a boyish liking still for deeds of daring and for swift sequences of hairbreadth escapes; but such puerilities pall sooner or later after a man has once plumbed the depths of life and seen for himself its seriousness. "When I was a child, I spake as a child," said the apostle; "I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." And the skeptic Montaigne tells us in his essay on books how he outgrew his youthful fondness for the marvelous. "As to the Amadises, and such kind of stuff, they had not the credit to take me, so much as in my childhood. And I will moreover say (whether boldly or rashly) that this old heavy soul of mine is

now no longer delighted with Ariosto, no, nor with the good fellow, Ovid; his facility and invention, with which I was formerly so ravished, are now of no relish, and I can hardly have the patience to read him." If Montaigne felt thus three hundred years ago, before the birth of the modern novel, we may perhaps maintain now that a continued preference for narratives of physical excitement is a sign of mental immaturity.

Montaigne could see only the first of the four stages through which fiction has been developed, and the fourth of them has been evolved only in our own time. Fiction dealt first with the Impossible, then with the Improbable, next with the Probable; and now at last with the Inevitable. The romances of chivalry, the Amadis of Gaul and its sequels, of which Montaigne wearied, may serve as a type of the first stage, abounding as they do in deeds frankly impossible; and it is not unfair to find specimens of the second class in the Waverley novels, in the Leatherstocking tales, and in the cycle of the Three Musketeers, wherein we are entranced by adventures, perhaps always possible but often highly improbable. In the third group come

the gentle novels of Jane Austen, confining themselves wholly to things probable; and in the final division we have Turgenef, for example, handling the common stuff of humanity, the plain matters of daily life, so as to bring out the inevitable result of the action and reaction of circumstance and character.

Sir Walter Scott once quoted the lumbering and inadequate definitions by means of which Dr. Johnson sought to differentiate the romance and the novel. A romance, in Dr. Johnson's eyes, was "a military fable of the Middle Ages; a tale of wild adventure in love and chivalry," while a novel was "a smooth tale, generally of love." Scott himself proposed to amend by defining a romance as "a fictitious narrative in prose or verse, the interest of which turns upon marvelous or uncommon incidents," and a novel as "a fictitious narrative, differing from the romance because the events are accommodated to the ordinary train of human events and the modern state of society." With his usual clear-headed common sense Scott seized the true line of demarcation, and his definition holds to-day, although the novel has expanded

immensely of late and has aspects now that would greatly have surprised him. The novel takes for its own what is likely, what is usual, what is ordinary, while the romance revels in the unlikely, the unusual, and the extraordinary. The novel could not come into existence until after fiction had progressed from the Impossible and the Improbable at least to the Probable. To this day the romance seems to many a mere amusement, the sport of an idle hour, and therefore none too respectable, whereas the novel is held to a higher responsibility; and if it aspires to the dignity of the drama it may be judged by the same lofty standards.

Romance is fond of trying to improve its literary standing by pretending that it is also history. It was John Richard Green who once defined a novel as "history without documents — nothing to prove it;" and it is possible that the historian of the English people meant by this to exclude that bastard hybrid of fact and fancy which is known as the historical romance. We recognize that the tales of Russian life, for instance, which traveling Frenchmen have narrated, cannot be wholly trustworthy, or at least we can guess

at their inexactness by recalling the stories of America written by British authors; and we cannot deny that the author of a historical romance is also a carpetbagger, — not through space but through time, — and if his blunders be not so obvious none the less must he blunder abundantly. As the best novels of Russian life are those written by the Russians themselves and the best novels of American life are those written by Americans, so the best novels of eighteenth-century manners, for example, are those written in the eighteenth century, and the most adequate stories of the Italian renascence are the stories written by Italians during the renascence. If "Romola" is a great book, it is great not because of its historical pretensions, but in spite of them. The historical romances of writers less well equipped than George Eliot need detain the student of fiction but very briefly.

VI

A consideration of the history of the modern novel brings out two facts. First, that the technique has been steadily improving, that the story is now told more directly, that character is now portrayed more care-

fully and elaborately, and that the artist is more self-respecting and takes his work more seriously; and, second, that the desire to reproduce life with all its intricacies has increased with the ability to accomplish this. The best fiction of the nineteenth century is far less artificial and less arbitrary than the best fiction of the eighteenth century. Serious novelists — and I include among them serious humorists like Mark Twain, whose "Huckleberry Finn" is a masterpiece of verity — serious novelists nowadays seek for the interest of their narratives not in the accidents that befall the hero nor in the external perils from which he chances to escape, but rather in the man himself, in his character with its balance of good and evil, in his struggle with his conscience, in his reaction against his heredity and his environment. Know thyself, said the Greek philosopher, and the English poet told us that the proper study of mankind is man. The modern novel, wisely studied, is an instrument of great subtlety for the acquiring of a knowledge of ourselves and of our fellow men. It broadens our sympathy, by telling us how the other half lives, and it also sharpens our

insight into humanity at large. It helps us to take a large and liberal view of life; it enlightens, it sustains, and it cheers. What Mr. John Morley once said of literature as a whole is even more accurate when applied to fiction alone: its purpose is "to bring sunshine into our hearts and to drive moonshine out of our heads."

POETRY

REFERENCES

One of the most suggestive modern discussions of poetry is Mr. Theodore Watts-Dunton's article, "Poetry," in the Encyclopedia Britannica. Gummere's "Handbook of Poetics" (Ginn & Co.) is a useful guide to the field of poetic theory. Metrical questions are also well discussed in Corson's "Primer of English Verse" (Ginn & Co.). Professor Cook has edited in attractive form five books about poetry: "The Art of Poetry: the Poetical Treatises of Horace, Vida and Boileau," Sir Philip Sidney's "Defence of Poesy," Shelley's "Defense of Poetry," Leigh Hunt's "What is Poetry?" and Newman's "Essay on Aristotle's Poetics" (Ginn & Co.). Professor Rhys's "Prelude to Poetry," a tiny volume published by Dent, contains not only the treatises of Sidney and Shelley, but striking passages about their art by Milton, Gray, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and other English poets. Wordsworth's famous prefaces are reprinted in the Macmillan one-volume edition. Browning's interesting essay on Shelley is given in the Cambridge edition (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.). Professor Raymond's "Poetry as a Representative Art" (Putnam), Mr. Stedman's "Nature and Elements of Poetry" (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.) and Professor Woodberry's "New Defense of Poetry" (in "Heart of Man," Macmillan) are among the best contributions to the subject by American scholars. For a complete bibliography, consult Gayley and Scott's "Introduction to the Study of Literary Criticism; Vol. I., Poetics and the Drama" (Ginn & Co.).

POETRY

To frame a perfect definition of poetry is to square the circle. It cannot be done. Yet the problem continues to fascinate the critics, and their approximate solutions make up a whole chapter of literature. Hundreds of books have been written to explain Aristotle's explanation of tragedy; and if other definitions of the various provinces and functions of poetry have been less exploited, it is only because they have originated in some less fertile mind. It must be remembered that in dealing with poetry we are dealing with an art older than recorded history, one that has expressed in Protean forms the enduring emotions of the race as well as the fugitive moods of the individual. An adequate definition must be comprehensive enough to include its various types in every stage of human culture, and sufficiently accurate withal to indicate the mental conditions out of which poetry arises and to which it in

turn appeals. Who shall attempt to force this into the terms of a single formula? No wonder that poor Boswell exclaimed in perplexity, "Then, sir, what is poetry?" and that Dr. Johnson replied, "Why, sir, it is much easier to say what it is not. We all *know* what light is; but it is not easy to *tell* what it is." Does Mr. Ruskin tell us what poetry is when he defines it as "the suggestion by the imagination of noble grounds for noble emotions"? That would exclude "Tam O'Shanter" and "The Beggar's Chorus," and include Turner's landscapes and Beethoven's music. Archbishop Whately pronounced that "any composition in *verse* (and none that is not) is always called, whether good or bad, a poem by all who have no favorite hypothesis to maintain;" but

> "Thirty days hath September,
> April, June, and November"

is assuredly a composition in verse and yet no poem, while Whitman's "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed," though not in verse, is incontrovertibly a poem, at least in the eyes of "all who have no favorite hypothesis to maintain." In this old debate concerning verse as the criterion of poetry it is

curious to notice that the poets themselves have been more generous than the rhetoricians. "One may be a poet without versing," declares Sir Philip Sidney, "and a versifier without poetry." Shelley is even bolder: "The distinction between poets and prose writers," he says, "is a vulgar error. . . . Plato was essentially a poet — the truth and splendor of his imagery, and the melody of his language are the most intense that it is possible to conceive. . . . Lord Bacon was a poet." . . . And Coleridge — to quote no other names — would have it that the true antithesis is not between poetry and prose, but between poetry and science.

We must not enter here upon the history of the definitions of poetry. But they have a twofold value, quite aside from the light they throw upon the subject itself. Sometimes — as when Poe calls poetry "the rhythmical creation of Beauty," or Arnold terms it "a criticism of life" — they indicate the personal equation of the critic and illuminate his own creative work. And again, in the importance given by Greek theorists to the imitative function of poetry, or the stress laid by Romantic critics upon the imagina-

tive element, or the claims of the technicists regarding the power of mere sound apart from sense, we can trace the bias of the age or that of the school, and learn in this broader field the same lesson of the relativity of all æsthetic judgments. Every definition uses the dialect of a current philosophy or betrays the individual accent of the definer. But the phrase "emotional ideas in rhythmical language" is a widely accepted working definition. As expanded by Mr. Theodore Watts-Dunton it becomes, if not a faultless definition, at least as good a one as we are ever likely to get: "Poetry is the concrete and artistic expression of the human mind in emotional and rhythmical language."

Yet there is quite another way of arriving at a comprehension of the nature of poetry; namely, to watch the process by which it comes into being, to trace its origin in the poet's mind. That genetic method which explains the nature of things by considering the way in which they have come into being and which is transforming various departments of thought to-day, may be applied to poetry as well as to philosophy and science. For poetry presupposes an organ

for its production. To have poetry you must first have your poet, and the most hackneyed and likewise the best thing ever said about the poet is this, — that he is born and not made.

In other words, we are dealing with an organism which performs a certain particular function. Some of its processes are mysterious and are likely to remain so, and yet its structure and general laws of its activity lie open to scrutiny. Suppose we examine it. What is a poet, and how does he differ from the rest of us? Here are Burns, Heine, Shelley, Longfellow, — poets all. How are they differentiated from other men, even from other men of letters? And furthermore, what are the conditions essential to their poetical activity, to the functioning, that is to say, of the poet *qua* poet? A frightened cuttle-fish squirts ink into the sea water; your agitated poet spreads ink on paper; in both cases it is a question of an organism, a stimulus and a reaction. The image of the solitary reaper stirs a Wordsworth, and the result is a poem; a profound sorrow comes to Alfred Tennyson, and he produces "In Memoriam."

We turn first, then, to the impressions which the poet receives, from whatever source. Into his mind, as into ours, flows an unbroken stream of sense perceptions. He has no immunity from the universal experience; he loves and he is angry and he sees men born and die; he becomes according to the measure of his capacity a thinker; he is forced to reckon with the outer world and the inner world and the other world. In a word, he is a man, and nothing human is alien to him. But he is likely to have a finer endowment than other mortals, a more delicate impressibility. The mere eyesight of many English poets has been notoriously acute; they have been extraordinary observers of the details of nature, and of the infinite varieties of human costume and character. And yet the poet's physical vision is not so noteworthy as the psychical vision which he frequently displays. He sees into the human heart, comprehends the working of the human mind; he reads the divine justice in the tragic fall of kings; he penetrates beneath the external forms of nature and perceives her as a "living presence" or perhaps as a "pathetic fallacy."

The astronomer Lalande said that he had swept the whole heavens with his glass and seen no God; but to Emerson, the poet, the sky was "full of light and of deity."

Yet the faculty of vision which the poet possesses in so eminent a degree is shared by many who are not poets. Darwin's outward eye was as keen as Wordsworth's; St. Paul's sense of the reality of the invisible world is more wonderful than Shakespeare's. The poet is indeed first of all a seer, but he must be something more than a seer before he is wholly poet.

Another mark of the poetic mind is its vivid sense of relations. The part suggests the whole. In the single instance there is a hint of the general law. The self-same Power that brings the fresh rhodora to the woods brings the poet there also. In the field-mouse, the daisy, the water-fowl, he beholds types and symbols. His own experience stands for all men's. The conscience-stricken Macbeth is a poet when he cries, "Life is a walking shadow," and King Lear makes the same pathetic generalization when he exclaims, "What, have his daughters brought him to this pass?" Through

the shifting phenomena of the present the poet feels the sweep of the universe: his mimic play and "the great globe itself" are alike an "insubstantial pageant," though it may happen, as Tennyson said of Wordsworth, that even in the transient he gives the sense of the abiding, "whose dwelling is the light of setting suns."

But this perception of relations, characteristic as it is of the poetic temper, is also an attribute of the philosopher. The intellect of a Newton, too, leaps from the specific instance to the general law; every man, in proportion to his intelligence and insight, feels that the world is one; while Plato and Descartes play with the time and space world with all the grave sportiveness of a Prospero.

Again, the poets have always been the "genus irritabile" — the irritable tribe. They not only see deeply, but feel acutely. Often they are too highly sensitized for their own happiness. If they receive a pleasure more exquisite than ours from a flower, a glimpse of the sea, a gracious action, they are correspondingly quick to feel dissonances, imperfections, slights. Like Lamb,

they are rather squeamish about their women and children. Like Keats, they are "snuffed out by an article." Keener pleasures, keener pains, this is the law of their life; but it is applicable to all persons of the so-called artistic temperament. It is one of the universal penalties of a fine organism. It does not of itself describe a poet.

The real difference between the poet and other men seems to lie in a transforming imagination by virtue of which his impressions undergo a change in kind. Emotional thought, passing through his mind, becomes poetic thought. Into that brain-crucible of his is thrown his raw material, — whatever he has seen and felt, — and it comes out changed. It is by reason of this mysterious chemistry that the poet deserves the name of maker. He possesses now not only "the vision" but "the faculty divine;" the seer has become the creator. We are taught that carbon, under certain conditions of intense heat and pressure, becomes diamond; and in some such fusion caused by emotional excitement, the image-making power, the "shaping spirit of imagination," seems to find or make all its material plastic to its

touch, crystallizes it into new forms, embodies it in language. It is a verbal image now; a concrete expression of the old fact in a new medium, under new laws. Henceforth it is not called carbon, it is diamond; but it must be cut and polished still, and mounted so that every facet flashes back the light. The poem must express in appropriate language the emotional thought which it contains. The poet must be not merely a seer and a maker but a singer; or, to use the Wordsworthian terms once more, he must possess not only "the vision and the faculty divine," but also "the accomplishment of verse."

This third and final stage of the process by which a poem comes into being lies peculiarly open to the observation of the critic, for in the conscious employment of language as a means to an end the poet is using a tool familiar to all literary workmen. They do not possess the same skill, but they know what he is doing. They see him select, now with the rapidity of instinct, now with long labor, certain words from the thousands within call. Sometimes he seems to take the language of ordinary life, but it is always

with artful suppressions, avoidances, additions. Selection itself is a sort of idealization, a re-moulding of reality. The poet is forever choosing words that are redolent of past experience, rich in emotional associations. If they belong to the conventional dialect of poetry — Arcadia's current coin — they are often worn meaningless by use, until there is need of a fresh minting; and then from a foreign tongue, or from new fields of thought or action, or up from the unrecognized speech of lowly folk comes a new troop of words to serve their turn for a season.

Since the poet thinks in figures — else he is no poet — he is bound to use figurative language. Strong feeling grasps instinctively at figured statement. Let us once grow angry or in love, and the plain literal assertion becomes absurd; we turn poets for the nonce, and deal with tropes and parables. The poet is a picture-writer, conveying not so much the fact, as his impression of the fact. His language is thus representative, rather than presentative. In the "Century Dictionary" the skylark is described as "a small oscine passerine bird of the family Alaudidae . . . insectivorous and migratory;" in your Shel-

ley the same bird is pictured as an "unbodied joy!" The first statement presents the object in terms of thought, the second represents it in terms of feeling; the first gives the fact, the second an image of the fact; one has the logical truth of prose, the other the imaginative truth of poetry.

Again, every expression of emotion through language is rhythmical. From the child's sob to the splendid periods of a Webster or a Ruskin the utterance of strong feeling is marked, for physiological as well as rhetorical reasons, by more or less regularly recurring stress. In availing himself of rhythm, therefore, the poet employs the natural and inevitable medium for the communication of his particular mode of mental action. But he goes further than this. If he wishes to escape from the company of the "prose poets," who are likewise giving a more or less rhythmical expression to emotional ideas, and using concrete figures and impassioned doctrine, he must use language that is not only rhythmical but metrical.

Now metre, that is to say — in English poetry — a certain combination of accented and unaccented syllables, repeated in fixed

measures, with such variations and substitutions as the ear allows, is rhythm captured and controlled. It springs from and in turn evokes an emotional mood, compelling the attention of the listener, and quickening the poet's flagging energy. It is thus an aid rather than a fetter to expression.

The same may be said of rhyme, in whose artistic use there is opportunity for consummate skill, in spite of the complaint humorously voiced by Chaucer and repeated by generations of dictionary-turning poets, that "Ryme in Englissh hath such skarsetee." Yet blank verse is our noblest poetic measure, affording in its endless variety of phrasing, cadence, and pause an unequaled melody and harmony.

For the poet's language, to sum up much in little, should be capable of giving pleasure to the ear alone, just as the painter must please the eye before he can reach the mind. There is a tone-color scale of sound more subtle in its emotional effect than the colors upon the painter's palette. The spoken word is more than mere vibrations, however musical those may be; it is a symbol as well. It comes to us freighted with meaning, clear or

vague; with memories of happiness or terror. It appeals not merely to individual experience, but is colored also by the emotional history of the race. The word "raven" had a foreboding sound long before Shakespeare placed the bird upon Macbeth's battlements. "Home" and "fire" and "child" have a music deeper than the melodious syllables.

The poet's mastery of expression therefore turns upon his sense of the poetic values of words, and of their expressional possibilities when combined into rhythmical and metrical patterns. He produces a succession of verbal images, pleasing to the ear and significant to the mind. We have seen that the material with which he works is extraordinarily complex, — far more so than the sculptor's clay or bronze, the painter's pigments, or the musical composer's scale of sounds. It is difficult in any of these arts to make a clear division between content and form; between that which is to be expressed and the particular beautiful object by means of which the artist has conveyed his intention. The more consummate the work of art, the more impossible does it become to separate its soul from its body. And yet it is often instructive to

attempt the separation, and to analyze the stages of the threefold process which we have been considering. Few readers would quarrel with the assertion that Browning's thought, his verdict upon life, is the marked characteristic of his poetry, as Blake's distinction lies in his imaginative power, and Swinburne's in his command of language. In this triad, Browning is preëminently the "seer," Blake the "maker," and Swinburne the "singer," though of course all three see and make and sing. A poet may reveal genius either in insight, imagination, or technique; and the more imperfectly the elements are fused, the easier it is for the critic to point out the predominating gift.

Our difficulty lies at precisely the most interesting point of the whole process, the point, namely, where content passes over into form through the crystallizing power of the imagination. Here is the real creative act; the free play of personality; the justification of the proud outburst of the English poet, —

> "I have a bit of flat in my soul,
> And can myself create my little world."

And here, too, is the place of Inspiration, the breathing into the finite mind of the potency

of the Infinite Mind, so that the poet becomes the prophet, the spokesman of One mightier than himself.

But the transformation of emotional thought into poetic thought becomes less mysterious if we consider the analogies presented by the allied arts. These all illustrate the artist's remodeling of reality, his expression in new terms of the impressions he has received. In the words of John LaFarge, art "is the representation of the artist's view of the world." It is "nature seen through a temperament," says Taine; "nature made human," says Professor Raymond. The bronze Hermes of the Naples museum is not a servile copy of an actual human figure; it is a particular artist's representation of a type; it is the embodiment of an idea. The landscapes of the Barbizon school of painters are the record of an honest attempt to observe nature at first hand; they show truth to fact as well as the higher truth of feeling; and yet each of those canvases betrays the individual temperament of the painter. It portrays a group of trees in the morning mist, or a tiny pond hidden in the forest, but we speak of it as "a Corot," "a Rousseau,"

because the man has consciously or unconsciously put himself into the work. The law is everywhere the same. Vision, imaginative transformation, expression, — these are the three universal factors in art production.

The various types of poetry are thus illuminated at many points by the other arts of action or repose. The lyric, the most direct expression of personal emotion which the whole field of poetry presents, has obvious analogies with music. Originally intended to be accompanied by music, — a song that was meant to be sung, — the lyric still retains and is tested by its singing quality. Yet its melody is less unalloyed than that of the harp or flute, its old companions. Their notes are pure music, freed from the world of fact, bound by no law save that of inner harmony. But the lyric poet is entangled in the world of fact, though his lyric cry may be, "O that I might escape from it! That I had wings like a dove!" His song depicts a situation, a desire; the words have connotations of thought as well as feeling, else they are melodious nonsense. The representation of definite thought or fact degrades music from its ideal function as the harmoni-

ous expression of human emotion in terms of sound; but the very element that alloys music gives poetry consistency and dignity, and makes it the noblest of the arts.

When the poet turns his gaze from himself to nature, he often finds the painter standing by his side. In the idyl or the modern descriptive sonnet the method tends to become strictly pictorial. The very vocabulary of latter-day landscape poetry has been largely borrowed from the studios, although the strained effort to render in words what the artist can easily express in colors or black and white has become one of the marked defects of contemporary writing.

While the very nature of language classifies poetry among the so-called "time arts," which deal most appropriately with a succession of actions, as in the epic, rather than with objects, it may nevertheless concern itself like sculpture with arrested actions, eternalizing the one significant moment. The sense of form, the exquisiteness of line, revealed in Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" is as sculpturesque as that "fair attitude" of the very marble. And is it too fanciful to find in the construction of

the drama — in the sequence of its parts, its ordered beauty, the inevitableness of its converging lines, its manifestation of superintending thought, in a word, its architectonic quality — a parallel to the art of the great builders? It is no question here of emotional sensibility and musical utterance merely; the task demands that finest form of genius, sanity; it calls for a Sophocles or a Molière.

A further illustration of the nature of poetry is to be found in its kinship with other forms of imaginative literature. The prose drama differentiates itself from the poetical not more by the absence of rhythmical and metrical effects, and hence a lessened capacity for formal beauty, than by the less complete imaginative fusion of its materials, by the predominance of fact — however witty and interesting the presentation — over truth. The more clever the problem-play, the more triumphant its solution of a psychological puzzle, the farther may it be from genuine poetry. The same may be said of many manifestations of that realistic spirit which asserts the equal value, for literary purposes, of all objects of thought.

Whitman's "catalogue poems" — with their random mention of things and actions and places as inherently poetical, are no more poems than a loud roll-call of the scholars is teaching school. The teacher's faculties, apparently so active, are really asleep and only the eye and the tongue are moving. Here is where Walt loafs, but does not invite the soul.

On the other hand, fervid and sustained passages from the great orators frequently exhibit every element of poetry, except the distinctive tunes and color of verse; and likewise, there is a great deal of unexceptionable verse which is oratory in disguise, persuasive rhetoric rather than poetry. "Childe Harold" — to make use of a familiar example — often reads like an eloquent funeral discourse over the grandeur of departed nations. Many of the vigorous metrical productions of Mr. Kipling belong to the category of political declamation. "Wrath makes verse," said the Roman satirist, and he was quite right. Personal invective and profound political convictions have alike assumed the conventional robes of poetry, and yet it remains true, as a critic

in the "Athenæum" wrote very admirably the other day, that "Poetry is a new way of seeing things, rather than a loud way of saying them."

Finally, and perhaps more perfectly than other literary types, the art of prose fiction aids in the delimitation of the field of poetry. The novelist and the poet have, or should have, many qualities in common. They both depict life in concrete terms by means of artistic language. But the novelist can deal with a wider range of fact without ceasing to give pleasure. His general attitude may be more circumspect and scientific, although in his lyric passages he may strive to outvie the poet himself. The same man, in different periods of life or in different moods, may be markedly successful in both arts, as were Scott and Victor Hugo. And yet, without underestimating the splendid imaginative triumphs of prose fiction in our own century, it remains true that poetry is the finer art, more exacting in its technical demands, and rewarding the craftsman with glimpses of a more ravishing beauty. Both romancer and poet may be "seers," but the romancer is only a writer, while the

poet sings. Intimate as is the association of poetry with other forms of literature, its feet are set upon more difficult ways and it seeks a higher goal. It is a "forerunner;" its loins are girded about and its lamps are burning. The shining presence comes and goes, and whenever a great poet dies the most materialized human society feels itself spiritually poorer.

To point out the true nature of poetry is to have given the best of all reasons why we should read it. If poetry be really what Shelley thought it, "the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds," its claims need no enforcement, provided they are once perceived. No new converts are to be gained by pounding upon the desk, or pronouncing under what compulsion one must peruse his Shakespeare or his Tennyson. And yet there are certain considerations, implied in what has been said already rather than forming a hortatory adjunct to it, which should not be overlooked.

If an appreciation of the fine arts counts for anything in culture, it is worth remem-

bering that poetry is the most accessible of the arts, — indeed, the only one that is always accessible. The noblest architecture, the most perfect productions of painting and sculpture, the greatest music, are beyond the reach of the plain American. They are perquisites for the traveled, the rich, the dwellers in a few cities. However much we rejoice in the progress of American art, and in the increased opportunities for the cultivation of popular taste, these conditions cannot be essentially changed in a country like our own. But the most magnificent poetical literature in the world is the birthright of every man and woman of us who can read. In every hour that can be won from toil here is a House Beautiful with its open ivory gate. Nay, at any time and anywhere, if you can but murmur the lines you love, the fadeless pictures rise and Pan's pipes are once more playing!

That is a shallow criticism which detects in modern civilization certain forces destructive of poetry, and overlooks at the same time tendencies distinctly favorable to poetry. The universality of those emotions to which a true poem appeals has never had

so striking an illustration as the instant and world-wide recognition of Mr. Kipling's "Recessional." The ease of international communication, the swift exchange of ideas and aspirations, tend to a unification of human feeling which gives the poet of to-day an audience such as never poet had before. In men of every English-speaking state there is something which responds to a poem like the "Recessional;" and yet it is possible to point out productions — like "Macbeth" and "Othello" — still more unlimited in their scope, whose significance is clear not merely to the Anglo-Saxon, but to the "general heart of man."

For everywhere we shall find this craving, imperious or obscure, for the æsthetic satisfaction of those longings for which actual life does not adequately provide. Here is a youth fiery-hearted, thirsting for truth, turning feverishly from one field of human knowledge to another, finding no resting place for his spirit. Does poetry give him what he seeks? In one sense, no; and yet in a very true sense, yes. In Goethe's "Faust" or Browning's "Paracelsus" — poetical treatments of imaginary cases like

his own, he will find his problem wrought out, a solution reached, artistic truth attained. This artistic truth may serve him for actual truth; by losing himself in the imaginative land of poetry, he finds his real self. We cannot question this daily miracle. It has too many witnesses. And is it so very strange? Where is the truth concerning the great human relationships to be found? Is it in the manuals of physiology and psychology and sociology, or is it in Shakespeare? Is the truth about the Deity to be found in the treatises on Systematic Theology, or in Job and Isaiah?

Pathetic is the fortune, again, of the person who craves affection even more than truth, but whose environment is blandly indifferent or fiercely hostile to his desires. It is something, at least, that he may turn to the ideal world, and lose his heart to Rose Aylmer, Landor's

> "Rose Aylmer, whom these wakeful eyes
> May weep, but never see."

It is something, surely, to be able through the magic of poetry to live now and then, like Charles Lamb, with your "dream-children;" to breathe the enchanted air, and for

the moment believe yourself lovable and beloved.

Or it may be the realm of outward action for which the ardent youth, and the recluse, and the drudge in some unlovely calling are yearning. By way of recompense for the uneventful day's routine they have but to open a book, and straightway they are under the walls of Troy, or marching with the Burgundians, or riding with the Douglas and his men. The mimic life of the drama arrests them, beckons them to follow, and lo! your shop-girl and bank-clerk are watching Portia jest, and Lady Macbeth listen, and Hamlet hesitate, and Harry the Fifth make love. It is a dream world, this world of poetry, — of appearance, as the philosophers say, and not reality, — and yet for that very reason it is an abiding world, a mansion of the mind, filled with lovely forms and furnished for our delight.

But does the reading of poetry afford discipline as well as delight? There is a distrust of it in many quarters as something sentimental, moonshiny, indefinite. The people who like to know what makes the trolley car go are not the people, generally speak-

ing, who would pluck out the heart of Hamlet's mystery. I have known a feminine biologist to discover at twenty-eight that Emerson was commonplace, and a distinguished Latinist to declare that he never thinks nowadays of reading Virgil as poetry. The scientifically trained mind frequently betrays this lurking contempt for the æsthetically trained mind,— a contempt, it may be added, which the artist returns with interest. The two points of view are in fact irreconcilable. The mental discipline emphasized by much modern education is not to be found in poetry. The very attempt to study poetry in the scientific spirit, with the so-called laboratory method, is very likely a blunder. And nevertheless poetry may be a school of clear thinking and apt speech. You must have your wits about you to read Pope, and be an all-round intellectual athlete if you would fence and wrestle and leap with Browning. Indeed, the latter poet has suffered from the very adroitness that makes it such a mental stimulus to read him; he loves to gymnasticize when he should be singing, and your Browning Club often degenerates into a debating society.

The disciplinary value of poetry depends rather upon its implicit intellectual force, that which is hidden beneath and secretly sustains the lines of beauty. Like the discipline afforded by all serious art, it is proportioned to the seriousness of the poet's intention, to the substance and quality of his thought. To read Dante requires strenuous effort, not so much because of the difficulty of his language and our unfamiliarity with thirteenth-century ideas, as that you must rise — as nearly as may be — to Dante's height and deliberately measure your power against his, like the young Wordsworth envisaging the Alps.

It is because poetry of this kind calls forth the total intellectual activity of the reader that it so profoundly exercises the imagination. For the imagination, as we are told so often, is not a separate faculty; it is the whole mind thrown into the process of imagining. To recreate in your own brain the imagery of a poem is to become in some degree a poet yourself. No poetic fancies are too slight to cultivate in some degree the reader's imagination, but the richer harvests come when the soil is

deeply stirred and the field widens to the horizon.

The recognition of poetic beauty, likewise, grows more exquisite with use. There is no pleasing word or happy metaphor or harmonious cadence that fails to educate the eye and ear; and it is often by virtue of such training in the more sensuous poetic pleasures that one learns to appreciate verse of a more severe and noble type. This familiarity with the language of poetry, this quick response to its formal beauty, is essential if poetry is to perform for us its office of interpreter. The poet is constantly translating the world to us, in terms that we can learn to understand. He opens our eyes, and, paradoxically enough, we notice the things about us because we have read books, precisely as the Barbizon painters are said to have gotten their enthusiasm for open-air work from studying Dutch paintings in the museums. What lover of poetry is there who has not learned thereby to observe the face of nature more closely, and to perceive more vividly the meaning of what he sees? The same truth holds in the field of human life and character. Did the Duke

of Marlborough learn all his English history from Shakespeare's plays? He had a good teacher. But is there nothing to be learned from "The Ring and the Book"? Or rather, is there any fact of life or source of emotion or law of conduct which is not in some way or other thrown into clearer light by that extraordinary masterpiece? And if we turn from the world of phenomena to that world which is most real because most invisible, we shall still find that the poets are its best interpreters. They chant its joyous bondage in an "Ode to Duty," its law of spiritual surrender in a "Palace of Art;" a students' drinking song in mediæval Latin will set the brevity and pathos of human life over against those unseen and enduring glories; and every broken spirit finds refuge in the Psalms of the Hebrew King.

It is thus that poetry becomes a resource, renewing our sense of beauty, and reminding us of those realities of which all lovely things are but symbols. I recall the confession of a venerable scholar, sitting in his plain library while the autumn rains beat against the window, and reviewing some of the cramped circumstances and bitter disap-

pointments of his career. "Poetry," he said slowly, "has been the consolation of my life."

It is a solace to know that the poets are always there at the outposts of experience, alert for new tidings, on guard against the ancient enemies of spiritual freedom. We quail before disasters, grow clodlike under the weight of custom and routine. They keep singing as they fight, and with immortal enthusiasm pronounce each day beautiful and good. Or if it happens, as Heine said of himself, that their hearts break though their swords are unbroken, they die dreaming of a better time. Shelley and Byron were unhappy enough, and told all about their misery, but to the last they were unconquerable idealists, undisciplined but very gallant soldiers in the long warfare for the emancipation of society. The indefeasible ardor of such men is a trumpet call to every believer in a good cause; and if the poets cannot assure us that we ourselves shall witness the ultimate triumph, they can at least command us to —

> "Charge once more then, and be dumb!
> Let the victors, when they come,

When the forts of folly fall,
Find thy body by the wall!"

I have been reminding the lovers of poetry of the nature and claims of their heritage. Yet a word remains to be said concerning the way in which poetry may most profitably be read, and here I address myself more particularly to those whose reading has been mainly in other fields.

"Delight," said John Dryden, "is the chief, if not the only end of poesy; instruction can be admitted but in the second place; for poetry only instructs as it delights." Now one's delight in poetry, as in any other art, is largely dependent upon an intelligent understanding of its aims and, to some extent, of its technique. A fine building gives most pleasure to the cultivated eye, to the mind conversant with architecture. The connoisseur cannot, of course, appreciate every technical difficulty which the builder or painter or musician has overcome, but his familiarity with the best art, while perfecting his judgment, will increase his capacity for admiration. Approaching the work of art originally as a pleasure-giving whole, he becomes interested in technique as one of

the factors in his pleasure. He may indeed develop an interest in technique for its own sake, and halt there forever, but, more happily, he becomes able again to view the object as a beautiful whole, with pleasure heightened a hundred-fold through his knowledge of technical processes as contributory to the total result. It is well to study the parts of the cathedral, guide-book in hand, to know the exact length of the nave and depth of the chancel and height of the spire, to trace each flower and leaf in the carved capitals and analyze the color scheme of the rose-window; and it is better still, after doing all that, to wander through the town some quiet night and, emerging from the narrow street suddenly upon the cathedral itself, to feel the black bulk of it towering there in shadowy beauty, built for the glory of God.

The best guide-books to poetry have been written by the poets themselves. They have told not only how to build the lofty rhyme, but with what faith and purpose they have wrought. Their most informal utterances are rich in suggestion. Instance the table-talk of Goethe, the letters of Gray and Byron and Lowell, the prefaces of Shelley and

Wordsworth, Coleridge's random notes, the conversations recorded in the biography of Tennyson. The closer you get to these men, the more secrets of their art will they betray. To see one of them shrug his shoulders over a bit of doubtful practice is worth a whole treatise, and oh! to have caught the expression in Shakespeare's eye as Ben Jonson laid down the law upon the classical unities!

But the poets have also loved to praise their art at length. Witness Horace's genial "Art of Poetry," and Lessing's epoch-making "Laocoön;" the noble Defenses of Poetry by Sir Philip Sidney, Dryden, and Shelley; Landor's "Imaginary Conversations;" the papers of Leigh Hunt and Poe; Browning's essay on Shelley; and much more beside than can be mentioned here. Recall, too, the singular excellence of those essays upon poetry written by trained critics who were poets as well, like Coleridge and Matthew Arnold and Newman and Lowell, — to make no mention of living writers. All these generations of criticism and comment, beginning with Aristotle and ending with your mere academic pedagogue, have created a body of doctrine concerning poetry more considerable

and better worth consideration than the body of doctrine that has grown up around any other art. Do not neglect it. The better the reader of poetry knows what he is about the more pleasure is he likely to receive, provided he does not substitute the analysis of poetic pleasure for that pleasure itself. The man who tears out of the corner of his newspaper a bit of fugitive verse because he likes it is more to be envied than an Aristotle who does not like it.

The result of the study of poetic theory and of the laws of metrical structure should be a quicker sympathy with the poet's utterance. You must anticipate what he is trying to say, and accept the sort of language he is using. To interpret the symbols of his art requires practice. Think how very arbitrary they are: mere black marks on paper, like a sheet of music. You must translate them note by note, perceive the thought and feeling and combinations of musical sound which thrilled the poet when he first scrawled these crooked conventional signs. It is true that in all imaginative literature the letter killeth; and yet the letters, the alphabet of poetry, must be patiently learned, unless you are one

of the fortunate people to whom this sort of reading "comes by nature." Yet to stop with the analytic study of poetry is to count the rose's petals and forget to see the rose. Can any of us who had to parse Gray's "Elegy" in school tell to this day whether it is a good poem or a bad one?

The most perfect test of one's appreciation of the parts as related to the whole is doubtless to read the poem aloud. To do this adequately, as I have said elsewhere, "necessitates something more than a translation of the symbolism into terms of the understanding; it requires an interpretation of the emotional element in the poem, of that indeed which has made it a poem." Yet if you can read it fittingly and have done it often enough to make sure that the very sight of the letters sets all the sounds a-chiming in the ear, it may be better to read silently henceforward. The melodies unheard are sweeter! I confess to a sort of alarm when a friend proposes to read aloud to me from his favorite poet. It may be my favorite poet too! There is a famous lover and teacher of poetry who avers that he is the only man in America who knows how to read Keats's

"Ode to a Nightingale." But I will take his word for it.

While it is never too late to cultivate a taste for poetry, your true enthusiast is commonly caught young. The normal child is pleased by rhythm and imagery and thinks poetry a song-and-picture-book in one. The boy and girl, throbbing with emotions which their elders too frequently ignore or misinterpret, find in poetry an embodiment of their vague desires, an initiation into a new existence. To the man and woman poetry may be something different still. They may not be able, by a happy reversion of taste, to enjoy the song-and-picture-book kind of verse any more, nor "The Psalm of Life" kind any more, and there is no use in making believe that they do. Nor is there any wisdom on the other hand in trying to antedate experience, in forcing upon the child or adolescent a kind of literature that they cannot possibly comprehend. Hundreds of boys and girls read "Vanity Fair" and know all the words and perhaps like the book, and yet cannot in the nature of the case — luckily for them — know what Thackeray is talking about. Shakespeare's plays have something

for everybody, of course; but they will not make a man out of a boy or a philosopher out of a fool. There are people who talk glibly about "Sordello" and "Pippa Passes" who ought to be kept on "The Child's Garden of Verses" for a long time yet, and then introduced into the gentle and courtly society of Longfellow. "This is the poet for me!" one cries sometimes in the joy of discovery, without waiting to ask the sobering question, "Am I the man for him?" And perhaps it is not well to ask this question too curiously, but rather to trust to that instinct which draws together two persons destined to be friends. Commerce with books, as with men and women, may be spoiled by self-consciousness, by a too moralistic inquiry into the sources and ultimate benefits of what was intended by Heaven to be just a pleasure.

But at the risk of giving advice where it is not needed, let me urge the cultivation of an intimate acquaintance with at least one of the greater poets. You can secure an introduction to him without being called a tuft-hunter. Look at the world through his eyes, think his thoughts, thrill with his passion. Study his first boyish verse; watch him ripen,

deepen. Let him contradict and correct himself, — be his own commentator and critic. Learn him so thoroughly that you know what he would say to this or that, though he never happened to say it! To do this is to poetize the whole round of experience, particularly if your chosen poet be a man of your own century, stirred by the same events, haunted by the same doubts, exalted by the same faiths, as yourself. I should be far from instancing Walt Whitman as a perfectly endowed poet, but it is a confession of his power to find yourself unconsciously repeating after him, whenever you cross the ferry to New York, "Ah, what can ever be more stately and admirable to me than mast-stemmed Manhattan!" He takes this vast panoramic spectacle of modern American life, and finds poetry in it everywhere. True, he has no uniform power of making poetry out of it; he is only a rhapsodist, chanting, orating, self-absorbed, not seeing that Beauty herself is at that instant passing him with amused or averted face. But what shall be said of Browning, who sang of the body as well as Whitman and of the soul so very much better? Or of Tennyson, who is

depreciated sometimes by people who have just gone Columbusing over Whitman and Browning and imagine their new world outmarvels the old, until they sail back again, — Tennyson the faultless craftsman, a Merlin without the folly, the most full-orbed and glorious of the poetic voices of our time? And I am speaking, I hope, to a few Wordsworthians, who can say, with Edward FitzGerald, that they read all the other poets, but always end by coming back to their Daddy. Not the least reward for knowing one poet well is this restful sense of homecoming, after journeying far with the others.

But I must not call the roll of American and English poets, even by the greater names, — although in truth it is often the lesser poetic lights that shine most friendly to us. We may be awed by Milton and Shakespeare, and yet be on very good terms with some of their poor relations. Nor can I discuss the keen pleasure that the scholar feels in mastering the poetry of other races and other times. Here our choice of poetic companionship is rudely limited by ignorance and circumstance. Yet the real limitations are those of imperfect sympathy rather than

imperfect knowledge. Keats was a good enough Greek for the purpose, though he knew no Greek at all. He knew what he liked, and that was his salvation.

Like seeks like: that is the subtle law which directs these affinities, after all is said. We think we are choosing freely, but the choice turns upon our whole mental history, our spiritual fitness. Here are the poets in their singing robes, and here stand we, a very miscellaneous and dusty company by comparison. But through some heavenly hospitality we get presented to them, we fall into converse with this one and that one, we drift away in the crowd only to find ourselves unconsciously turning back again and renewing conversation, responding with our awkward ejaculations of delight, our hushed rapturous silence, to that clear-voiced utterance of theirs, more intimate than music and yet more musical than speech. And, marvelously enough! we discover that the poets and ourselves are friends already: that we have always cared for the same things, kept the same ideals, loved beauty, and like poor Malvolio in the play, thought "very nobly of the soul." All the past, as we listen, becomes

a part of the moment's joy, and the long, long future beckons. We perceive that the longer we listen the deeper will become the charm, that the ear grows finer by hearing and the voices ever more alluring and more wise; for these are spiritual utterances, and are spiritually discerned.

ESSAY AND CRITICISM

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ESSAY AND CRITICISM

"PLUTARCH and Seneca were soon in the foreground," writes Walter Pater in his desciption of Montaigne's library; "they would still be at his elbow to test and be tested: masters of the autumnal wisdom that was coming to be his own, ripe and placid — from the autumn of old Rome, of life, of the world, the very genius of second thoughts, of exquisite tact and discretion, of judgment upon knowledge." It is impossible to recall the earliest of modern essayists and one of the masters of the essay as a literary form without becoming aware of a rich background of human experience and a distinct and tenacious personality. The books at the elbow of the keen Gascon observer and the frank Gascon critic represented an immense accumulation of the phenomena and results of the process of living. Generations had left in those volumes a deposit of knowledge born of contact with the facts of life. Art and

beauty, knowledge and power, were in those books; but it is safe to say that Montaigne was drawn and held less by these qualities than by the deep human interest, the wide human experience, clarified, rationalized, and conserved by men who, having become the classics of our time, must have been the free, vital, creative men of their own time; for in order to become immortal one must first live. The great classics, instead of being conceived in grammar and born in rhetoric, as our unhappy method of approaching them sometimes makes us feel, were the first-hand observers, the free-hand narrators, the close-at-hand artists of their own age. They were usually innovators; they were often law-breakers; there was always a certain audacity of soul in them; for a man must be real before he is great, and to be real one must see things as they are and not as they are commonly represented to be. It is well to remember that Burns, Wordsworth, and Kipling — men who deal freely with their material and are suspected or accused of literary heresy — become, or are likely to become, the classics of a succeeding age. Homer and Theocritus are enshrined in such

eminent respectability that we are likely to forget that the first was a Bohemian, and that the second consorted familiarly with shepherds and other vulgar persons.

Montaigne, with the Greek and Latin classics at hand, brings before the mind in concrete fashion the two prime factors in the essay: wealth of human experience, and a personality keen or powerful or meditative. The epic poet may come before the historian and is more likely to furnish the true record of spiritual growth; he needs only a tradition, a legend and a responsive imagination. He may come at so early a period in the history of a people as to be semi-mythical himself; it is still uncertain whether the Homeric poems were composed by Homer or, to recall an old Oxford joke, by another man of the same name. Some of us will hold by the integrity of the Iliad and the Odyssey as the creation of an artist and not, in their present form, the composite work of innumerable forgotten poets; but it is of no consequence whether we are able to put this great maker in his place in his generation and call him by his name; the essential thing is that he had all things

necessary for the final and noble doing of his work.

The dramatist may arrive, as did Aeschylus and Euripides, Marlowe and Shakespeare, at the end or in the heart of great popular movements; when men are largely absorbed in action and are more concerned with the fruits of life than with its interior and ultimate significance, its more elusive aspects, its more obscure wisdom. For the theme of the drama is man in action; without action there is no character, and without character there is no dramatic development or climax. The dramatist may come, therefore, as he came in Greece, at the beginning of the full historic unfolding of race life. The lyric poet generally follows the epic poet, but whenever language has grown musical he may arrive; he is, of all makers of literature, the most independent, for he needs nothing save the ability to look into his own heart and the skill to hold the common currency of speech, as it passes through his hands, long enough to put his private mark on it.

The novelist has come late, it is true; later than any other of the great makers of

literature; but he is the lineal descendant of the story-teller, and the story-teller has had his tale and his audience these many centuries. He belongs to the youth of the race; he was followed and loved when men were children; he was curiously and unconsciously predicting science, foretelling modern invention and foreshadowing modern art when Bagdad was newly built, and Damascus was slowly blossoming into gardens and rising into walls beside her murmuring streams.

The epic poet, the dramatist, the lyric poet and the story-teller get their inspiration largely from the movement of the stream of life; they may appear whenever the vital impulse has become deep and strong, and the imagination has been energized; they do not need to wait upon experience, which is the record of accomplished life.

The essayist, on the other hand, appears late in the field because his function is not to give order and splendor to a race movement, to exhibit the individual in collision with the laws of life or the institutions of society, to put into musical speech the emotions or longings of his own heart, to make

stirring or beguiling romances and tales out of the possibilities of human intercourse and fortune; but to meditate upon what men have accomplished, endured, suffered and become in order to frame an informal philosophy, to announce a body of precepts, to bring out curious or significant traits of character, to set in humorous light the incongruities, the surprises and the paradoxes of human destiny. The sculptor cannot work without marble, and it has been noted that the creative centres of this noble art have never been far from quarries. The essayist cannot distill the wisdom of life until he has a considerable accumulation of the material of experience to work upon. He presupposes a certain fullness of development, a certain ripeness of civilization, a certain growth of culture. He need not be less original than his fellow craftsmen, but the form he uses appears later in literary development. The essayist has no place in primitive society; no voice in early literature; he is the product of a riper age; he comes after the poet, the dramatist, the story-teller and the historian, not because he is an imitator but because he needs their

work as part of the material with which he deals.

If the essayist has a forerunner it is the maker of the proverb; the man who puts wisdom into portable shape by packing the final results of experience into a phrase. But the proverb-maker is, as a rule, the master of a very limited field of observation; he runs with his eyes on the ground, concerned to discover the secrets of purely material success. His wisdom is often preëminently useful, but it is rarely profound, searching or illuminating. The proverbs with which Don Quixote is so thickly sown set off the idealism of the one of the great gentlemen in literature quite as effectively as the burly figure and coarse sense of Sancho Panza. It is noticeable that when the sayings of Poor Richard take a moral turn it is for practical ends. The essayist, on the other hand, delights in keen and clear perceptions of the ways of men and the relation of success or failure to character; but his wisdom is only incidentally prudential; he is not intent upon protecting men from their vices, their follies, and their mistakes by furnishing them with a portable wisdom

in the form of maxims illustrative of the value of honesty, temperance, industry, and thrift; he is intent upon seeing character for the interest of seeing it, upon discovering the interior relations of things because that discovery explains their outward forms, upon divining the humors of life and the secrets of fate because both satisfy the craving for refreshment or for truth.

The essay, as compared with the epic poem, the novel, or the history, is brief. Expanded beyond certain limits it inevitably becomes another form of literature. It is not always easy to mark its limits; but they are readily seen in their concrete illustration. Macaulay's essays may deal as definitely with historical events and persons as his history; but the perspective of events is foreshortened, the narrative is condensed, the principle of selection of events is more rigidly applied, and interest is fastened, not upon the main current, but upon some side current or eddy, upon some significant incident or figure. The essay is short, not because the material is limited or the power of the essayist unequal to fuller or more complete discussion; but because the function

of the essay is to bring into clear light a single truth or a group of closely related truths, a single character or a set of kindred characters, a single aspect or phase of a great movement. The essayist often has a complete view of life behind his brief and condensed reports or comments. Emerson's essays might have been woven together into a philosophical exposition; Carlyle's essays constitute a fairly complete body of spiritual doctrine, and might have been converted into history or theology; but in such a transformation the distinctively literary element would have been greatly reduced if not altogether lost.

This fact may bring us to the chief characteristic of the essay; it is not only a comment, a view of things, it is also a piece of literature. The essayist is an artist; one who, possibly by instinct at the start, certainly by intelligence later, selects, arranges, and so disposes his materials as to give them the highest effectiveness, the greatest charm, or the most searching power. The true essay is as distinctly a work of art as the epic or dramatic poem, the novel or the lyric. And that which gives it the quality of art is,

of course, form, but form always as an expression of personality. The historian and the philosophical writer obliterate themselves; the essayist emphasizes himself. He may deal with the facts of history or the principles of philosophy, as Macaulay on the one hand and Carlyle and Emerson on the other, were continually doing; but he is not content to set facts or principles in logical order; he must give them vitality, organic relation, suggestiveness, beauty. He is not a recorder; he is an artist, and it is the necessity of his nature that facts or principles shall be interpreted from his point of view, arranged in harmony with the law of his mind, set forth with all the subtle harmonies or the compelling force of that free and characteristic expression of himself which we call style.

The essay is essentially a study of a subject or person. It does not attempt a complete treatment, a portraiture which brings to the eye every detail of feature; it seeks rather to catch and report an expression which is significant of temperament, an attitude which discloses character. It is not concerned to tell the whole story, but only

such part of it as seems most dramatic, suggestive, or humorous. The earlier portrait painters conscientiously brought in every minute detail of feature and every accessory of dress; they not only completed their work, but they idealized it. They seemed to think that the unadorned truth was not only disloyal to art, but not quite respectful to their subjects. Hence the extraordinary beauty of the men and women of the old régime in France, of the time of Charles II., of the last century, as we find them on the walls of the galleries. The founders of our own state, our earlier men of letters, our older social leaders, shared in the same good fortune. Wherever nature failed them art came to their rescue. The contemporary painter has gone to the other extreme; he is intent upon getting at the character and making it tell its story on his canvas, indifferent to the quality or interest or charm of that story. He is concerned to represent the basal elements in the face; to get the foundation before the eye. When he has seized the character he is indifferent to detail; he is sketchy where his predecessor was exact and elaborate. Hence the marvelous

veracity of many modern portraits and their extraordinary ugliness. When the artist has the gift of representing a man not as he looks but as he is, unpleasant revelations are inevitable. Of Watts' portrait Carlyle writes: "Decidedly the most insufferable picture that has yet been made of me, a delirious-looking mountebank, full of violence, awkwardness, atrocity, and stupidity, without recognizable likeness to anything I have ever known in any feature of me." There is something of Carlyle in it, nevertheless. In like manner the essayist is concerned not to present a subject or a person with complete delineation, but in an attitude or expression which is significant and characteristic.

In Mr. Pater's sketch of Montaigne the background of Literature — that rich deposit and accumulation of past life — is brought into clear view; but the chief emphasis falls, where it belongs, on the essayist himself. Even in his most impersonal moods the essayist, like the poet and the novelist, is the chief factor in his work. Plutarch, Cicero, and Bacon discuss the gravest problems of experience in a philosophic temper; but the

attitude of each writer toward these problems is intensely individual. This individuality is revealed in the selection of subjects, the massing of facts, the choice of illustration and example, the ethical applications, the manner and style. It is with morals as Plutarch understands them, with friendship and old age as Cicero regards them, with honors, station, empire as Bacon values them, that we are concerned when we open the pages of these essayists of the most serious temper. Absorbed as he appears to be in the gravity of his themes, and intent upon bringing out their significance in an impersonal way, Bacon's temperament becomes as distinct in our consciousness before we have done with the essays as Charles Lamb's or De Quincey's. For in the essay, as in any work of art, the quality, the charm, that which lives, come from the personality of the artist. This is the chief factor; the materials with which he deals are open to all men; they are common property; it is the method of selection, combination, and expression which counts. If we want the bare fact, we go to history or, with discrimination, to the newspaper; if we want the

logical statement of principles, we go to philosophy; if we want the truth below the fact as a man of genius divines it, the truth touched with beauty as it lies in the vision of the artist, or irradiated with humor and projected against a background of other and diverse truth, as the humorist sees it, we turn to literature. In the essay we get a glimpse of character, a turn of humor, a significant aspect of affairs, interpenetrated by a rich personality.

It may be well, too, to recall one of the primary meanings of the word, and to remind ourselves that an essay is an attempt, a trial, a test. It involves a certain risk, because the essayist cannot count for success on the trustworthiness and importance of his facts; in order to succeed he must make the telling combination in the characteristic style. The accurate historian may fail to attain the quality of literature and yet become an authority; but if the essayist falls short of charm or grace or power he falls like Lucifer. Every essay is, therefore, a trial or test of strength or ease, and the essayist must find his charm and his power within himself.

"The autumnal wisdom," the "judgment upon knowledge," of which Mr. Pater speaks, begin to be distilled and formed whenever meditative minds find a mass of experience behind them. This experience may not have taken on the form and order of written history; it may be traditional, it may be indicated by proverbs passing from generation to generation along the obscure paths by which homely wisdom travels from race to race. In some form it must exist, and it never comes into being until a fairly advanced stage of development has been reached. Men do not attempt to rationalize experience until they have come to some degree of spiritual self-consciousness. The Hebrew mind was not primarily an artistic mind, although creative on the very highest plane and along the sublimest lines. It was concerned primarily with truth rather than with the expression of truth. The historian, the poet, the rhapsodist, the psalmist, the prophet, appear in rapid succession in Hebrew literature; but the essayist hardly finds his place there. Indeed, until Professor Moulton restored experimentally its literary form to the Bible, the essay was probably found in its pages by

very few of its most devout readers. The essayist is there, however, and his work has very great interest because it marks the transition from proverb-making to essay-writing; from the impersonal condensation of experience to its expansion through the introduction of the element of temperament and the literary sense. In this process the form of the proverb is not only enlarged, but its content of wisdom is immensely broadened; it is no longer a mere aphorism of prudence, it is a comment full of spiritual discernment; taking into account the fortunes of a man's spirit as well as of his body. What could be finer in its insight or more compact in wisdom and form than these familiar and yet unfamiliar words: —

"Wisdom exalteth her sons, and taketh hold of them that seek her. He that loveth her loveth life; and they that seek her early shall be filled with gladness. He that holdeth her fast shall inherit glory; and where he entereth, the Lord will bless. They that do her service shall minister to the Holy One; and them that love her the Lord doth love. He that giveth ear unto her shall judge the nations; and he that giveth heed unto her shall dwell securely. If he trust her, he shall inherit her; and his generations shall have her in possession. For at the first she will walk with him in crooked ways, and will bring fear and

dread upon him, and torment him with her discipline, until she may trust his soul, and try him by her judgments: then will she return again the straight way unto him, and will gladden him, and reveal to him her secrets. If he go astray, she will forsake him, and give him over to his fall."

This is not a paragraph torn from a philosophical discussion; it is a piece of true literature. It has the ripe touch of true "autumnal wisdom;" that wisdom which is the most precious deposit of the large experience and wide observation; that "judgment upon knowledge" which cannot be formed or pronounced until a great field has been traversed and explored. It is very brief, and yet within narrow limits it brings a man face to face with one of the deepest truths of living; it is condensed and it deals with principles, and yet it is as concrete in its way as the Psalms of David or the Book of Job. Wisdom is presented not as an abstraction but as a person; she does not send invisible influences to a man at long intervals; she walks beside him, guiding or forsaking him at his will, in real flesh and blood companionship. Here is not only truth but a personality; and here, consequently, is an essay and one of the earliest and most significant.

In literature of such duration and scope as the Greek and Latin, registering all the stages of racial development from the earliest hymns to the gods to those terrible satires which mark not only the decline of the human but the passing of the divine, the essay is found in clear and characteristic although not in fully developed form. In the masters of the classic essay — Plutarch, Seneca, Cicero — the element of personality is distinct and organic, but it is subordinate to the material. Emphasis rests on the truth rather than the presentation of the truth; so far as he can the writer conceals himself behind his art; for the classical method was as consistently objective as the nature of the artist, always craving expression, permitted. There is very little exaggeration of statement or eccentricity of opinion; there is a balance, moderation, and poise which betray the influence of a general agreement concerning the function of the writer. The force of organized traditional opinion, which has disclosed in French literature its value and its weakness, is steadily brought to bear to keep the genius of the individual well within the bounds of recognized order. There is no

license of individuality among the classical essayists; they are weighty, serious, dignified. They are not hampered, because they have no desire to be other than they are or to do other than they do; but we feel as if we were getting the most out of their subjects but not out of them. We are in closer touch with Plutarch in the Lives than in the Morals; we are nearer Cicero in the Orations than in the Meditations on friendship or old age.

The background of experience or truth is more prominent than the personality of the essayist in the older essay; it was the special function of the essay in its modern form to shift the emphasis to the writer and to give personality its freest play. Modern literature, in the sense of complete and perfectly authenticated work, may almost be said to begin with Montaigne, whose name is more completely identified with the essay than any other in literary history, and whose mind was perhaps as typical and representative as any that has ever chosen this form of expression. Bacon was a philosopher, a lawyer, and a statesman; Carlyle was a historian; Charles Lamb was a critic; but Montaigne was never other than an essayist. The form fitted his

temperament completely; he loved a wide and rich discursiveness; he touched at all ports, and he never overstayed his first fresh impressions. He charged Aristotle with having an oar in every water and meddling with all things; but compared with Montaigne, the philosopher was a dweller at the fireside. Montaigne's interest and curiosity carried him everywhere. That keen skeptical temper of his made him one of the closest of observers, but did not permit him to linger long at any place. He was a born traveler, and the traveler does not live with people or subjects, or surrender himself to the work of mastering a single field; he enjoys, studies, records, and passes on; he uses the philosophers and is often on their ground, but he is not one of them; he sees for a certain distance eye to eye with the moralists, but he also sees many things which escape them. He had no final system of things; he was persuaded that the finalities were beyond the reach of the mind in its present stage; he thought many questions insoluble, and he was not made unhappy by the discovery. He did not reject the Absolute, but he regarded it as beyond his comprehension and gave

himself up with eager delight to the study of the Relative; he was, accordingly, not deep and prophetic; he was inquisitive, fertile, rich in immediate resources, ripe in "judgment upon knowledge." He went through life, not with a profound sense of obligation and responsibility, but with consuming and contagious interest. He covers an immense surface. To a mind of this quality the essay was exactly adapted, and Montaigne remains its typical master.

It is easy to recall him because he painted his own portrait almost as often as Rembrandt. Low in stature, strongly built, slow of speech though full of thought; retiring from the practice of law at Bordeaux at the age of thirty-eight, and settling himself on his estate in Périgord in order that he might live his own life and nourish his own thoughts; a practical farmer; an uncompromising truth-teller and fair-dealer in all things; letting his doors stand wide when other houses were closed and garrisoned like forts; sowing deep the seeds of confidence and respect in his own neighborhood; a man of pleasure and a more than easy liver turned student; alone much of the time in his tower; his

books about him, his eye ceaselessly searching history and his own time; at home in the world and frankly of it; looking with a lenient eye on all phases of human life, but holding steadily to absolute integrity; plain of speech to the verge of grossness and sometimes over the line, and yet so frank and honest withal that he disarms our criticism when we recall the men for whom and the time in which he wrote; immensely interested in himself, his thoughts, occupations, journeys, books, diseases, and yet writing over his own name the significant words "Que scais je?" When a man honestly asks himself "What do I know" he may be a good deal of an egotist without losing his poise. Montaigne was not a great man, as Dante and Shakespeare were great; but he was great in breadth and variety of interest, in the wisdom of clear sight, in continuous fertility.

In the characteristic study "Of Lyers" Montaigne humorously confesses his defects of memory and solaces himself with an enumeration of compensations. "Above all," he writes, "old men are dangerous, who have only the memorie of things past left them,

and have lost the remembrance of their repetitions." He escaped this peril; for while he is one of the most talkative men in literature, he is never garrulous. He struck the note of the essay when he put himself on easy terms with the reader, laid aside the formalities of the grand style, and spoke directly, simply, and straight to the heart of his subject. The epic or dramatic poet cannot put off his singing robes, and ought not to make the attempt; the lyric poet must keep his distance or lose something of his charm; the historian and the novelist talk to us, but not with us; the essayist alone puts us in an equality with himself and gains by the familiarity. He is the most friendly and companionable of all the great writers; there is nobody quite like him for a dark day and an open fire. There are certain ceremonies to be observed with Dante and Milton; it is like going to Court to open the "Divine Comedy" or "Paradise Lost;" and one must choose his hour for "Lear" or "Faust;" but when was Charles Lamb out of place, or Addison *de trop*, or Alexander Smith's "Dream-thorp" out of key? The essayist is on easy terms with us from the start because

his interests and ours are identical; he cares for the very things we are always looking for, — the significant, characteristic, unusual, humorous things. He is concerned primarily with the immediate human interest in things. He is not blind to ultimate ends nor indifferent to interior relations; he is always a philosopher at heart; but his attention is fastened on the illustration of every kind of human quality. He makes us see the man first; and then, later, he may turn the man inside out if he chooses.

If Montaigne's memory was weak, he reenforced it with the memory of the race; no man draws his incidents from a wider field. He set the fashion, followed to Miss Repplier's time, of getting the strength out of quotations by setting them in a new order and furnishing them with a fuller context. The sturdy Gascon, who professed not to love reading and declared that an hour's unbroken companionship with a book was enough, was on the most intimate terms with Plutarch and the classics; but they were terms of equality, and he gave as much as he took. It is a great piece of good fortune to be intelligently quoted; it is the highest

kind of recognition, and it gives one the advantage of having light flashed upon his thought from a different quarter.

Montaigne had the older world behind him, and the newer world about him he studied with a keen eye; he was rich therefore in "autumnal wisdom." Emerson makes him describe himself as gray and autumnal. But that which gives the essays their flavor and quality is not the richness of their background, but the vigorous, free, frank personality of the essayist, the first of the great egotists in literature. The classical attitude is reversed; the first modern essayist is as much concerned with himself as was Rousseau or Byron. "I confess myself in public," he wrote. "I have no other end in writing but to discover myself." "If the world find fault that I speak too much of myself, I find fault that they do not so much as think of themselves." There was no plan in the work; he wrote only when the humor was on him and concerning things which interested him. He did not, apparently, take his readers into account; he felt no responsibility towards them. He proposed nothing more ambitious than a record of his thoughts,

impressions, habits, tastes, judgments, and feelings. He had much to say about the world, but only at the points at which it touched him. His success lies in the fact that his personality was so interesting, and that his confession has such frankness, vigor, reality. The older essayists had described the world as detached from themselves; he described it as it made room for him, reflected him, gave him food for thought. There is nothing so interesting to man as a man, and men are rarely seen in clear light. This man turned the searchlight of his penetrating mind full upon himself. He took the world into his confidence, and the world has not betrayed him.

Bacon, on the other hand, treated the world with grave courtesy, but did not put himself on terms of intimacy with it. Neither his matter nor his manner invites familiarity. When Lord Burleigh put off his official robes he said "Lie there, Lord Chancellor;" glad, apparently, of an easy return to his natural station. Bacon never lays aside the grand manner; he always wears his robes. No element in his life is more tragic than the contrast between the habitual dignity of his

bearing and the occasional littleness of his action. That there were strains of greatness in him is beyond question; such strains as are constantly heard in his essays do not issue from hollow natures. If Montaigne loved to gossip about matters of all degrees of importance, Bacon loved to invest every subject he touched with the gravity of far-reaching relationships, or with a dignity of approach which was like a royal progress. Montaigne's autumnal wisdom was distilled from knowledge of the most trifling as well as of the most momentous things; Bacon's judgment upon knowledge was accumulated, apparently, by habitual contact with the most far-reaching themes. Both essayists possess in a preëminent degree that final and higher product of knowledge which we call wisdom; but Bacon's principle of selection was far more rigid than Montaigne's. The Gascon entertained himself with "all sorts and conditions of men;" the Englishman associated only with the great. He is, therefore, narrower in range than his great predecessor, and his human interest is less. No one comes in contact with Bacon without receiving a deep impression of his power, but it is safe

to say that his readers do not love him. They are somewhat in awe of him. Montaigne has a rich background, but he keeps himself easily in the fore; he is the central figure and dominates the subject. Bacon, on the other hand, withdraws himself and puts us in direct contact with his themes and his thought. In Montaigne personality is the chief element of charm and interest; in Bacon the compelling power resides in a noble treatment of great matters. Bacon's personal contribution to his work is the quality of his mind, the affinities of his thought, revealed in his selection of themes, and the greatness of his manner. There is little egotism; there is rather the disposition to leave the stage clear for the actors. The bare list of Bacon's topics has an educational quality, — "Of Death," "Of Great Place," "Of Empire," "Of Ambition," "Of Honour and Reputation," "Of the True Greatness of Kingdoms and Estates."

Not only is the manner on a level with the themes, but Bacon's attitude towards his art has the same elevation. The second half of his title is significant of his purpose: "Essays or Counsels Civill and Morall." He was

not intent, as was Montaigne, to touch the things that interested him and to draw, with a thousand apparently careless strokes, his own portrait; he set himself to transform the wisdom of knowledge into the wisdom of life by continually applying this wisdom to great affairs of conduct and public action. "The greatest trust, between man and man," he writes, "is the Trust of Giving Counsell. For in other Confidences, Men commit the parts of life; Their Lands, their Goods, their Children, their Credit, some particular Affaire; But to such, as they make their Counsellours, they commit the whole: By how much the more, they are obliged to all Faith and integrity. The wisest Princes, need not think it any diminution to their Greatness, or derogation to their Sufficiency, to rely upon Counsell. God himselfe is not without; But hath made it one of the great Names, of his blessed Sonne; *The Counsellour*."

And however lacking in faith he may have been in other matters, in his dealings with his readers Bacon never violates his trust. In no other kindred body of writing is there more weight of thought, more concen-

tration of intellectual power, or loftier dignity of manner. In a certain noble eloquence the essays have never been surpassed; if they have not the long organ roll of Milton's and Hooker's prose, they have the same massive quality touched and vivified by imagination.

Bacon meditates upon the greatest affairs and studies conduct in its relation to the highest fortunes of men; Addison, the master of another kind of judgment upon knowledge, notes the quality and signs of social intercourse. He is the interpreter and censor of the age in English life which saw the birth of society in the modern sense of the word; men were drawing together as a reaction from excessive individualism in religion, morals, politics, and art, and because they were beginning to discern the resources of life as these are multiplied and heightened by intimacy and fellowship. Coffee-houses, taverns, clubs, assemblies, were bringing men into the city; the language was rapidly adapting itself to the uses of a polished society; it was gaining in lucidity, proportion, ease, flexibility, and simplicity. The novel, which is the characteristic literary product of men in society, came to swift maturity. In such a time the

essay became a natural and inevitable form of speech, perfectly adapted to the habits of the age, and admirably suited to the work of satire, correction, criticism, and entertainment. For half a century almost every writer of power tried his hand at it, but Addison remains the master of the essay of manners and of society. Never has a teacher worn a more winning aspect; never has a judge pronounced sentence with a more sympathetic insight into the experience of the convicted. With all his stateliness of manner, and in the face of the tradition of reserve and coldness which has grown up and inclosed him like a hedge of thorns, Addison was one of the most human of humans. His touch is light because it is kind; his manner is full of charm because he was full of sweetness; his courtesy is always suggesting the near presence of Sir Roger de Coverley because he was so near of kin to the second of the great gentlemen in literature. In his hands the essay is seen in perfection of form; it is brief; it deals with matters instinct with human interest; it is skillfully compounded of observation, insight, humor and judgment; it is touched with the charm of a

delightful personality expressed in a style full of character and distinction.

Bacon dealt with affairs of state and with conduct in relation to destiny; Addison with men in social relations; Charles Lamb deals with individual eccentricity, idiosyncrasy, and humor, and with the pathos and contradictions of life. In his hands the essay becomes as personal as it was in the hands of Montaigne, and as full of individuality, but his egotism is that of a very sensitive, tender, and sympathetic nature, with a genius for quaintnesses of all kinds, for the discovery of forgotten or neglected human traits, for the sweetness which often lies at the heart of eccentricity and the sacredness which sometimes hides itself behind oddity and excess. Lamb's mind was a rich storehouse of literary knowledge, and the discursiveness of his style was largely due to the breadth of his interests and information. He could be one of the sanest of critics or he could be as willful and fanciful as Donne; he could match the gravity and eloquence of Jeremy Taylor, or he could be as extravagant and irresponsible as Thomas Love Peacock. He had at times an old-fashioned manner which carries one back two

centuries, until some whimsicality gives it sudden and unmistakable contemporaneousness. He is at one moment in line with Sir Thomas Browne and Marvell, and at another he is the most capricious of humorists. No man can touch trivialities more lightly or gayly; nor can any man deal more reverently and seriously with the stern or tragic aspects of life. A vein of the deepest sentiment runs side by side with his humor, and those who love him find a wonderful sweetness not only in his life but in his mind. The "Essays of Elia" must always find their place with the books of the heart. "How could I hate him?" he once answered in reply to a question. "Don't I know him? I never could hate any one I knew." This note of catholicity is very characteristic of the essays; it explains their variety, their individual charm, their appeal to the imagination. They have this quality of great literature: they make us feel that it is impossible to treat them simply as pieces of writing. They have the intimacy of true literature; that interior relation to our hearts which makes us aware that they must have been true in experience before they were true in art. The

very genius of the essay is revealed in them; their contents could not have been committed to any other literary form. No other form would have provided for such remoteness and such familiarity; for such dignity and such whimsicality; for such unexpected and yet wholly natural interblending of wisdom and of humor. The essay as a human document, a record not only of a man of genius but of a human heart, has found unique setting at the hands of Lamb.

The essays of Carlyle and of Emerson make us aware of another point of view; they perceptibly widen the range of the essay by the new territory which they bring within the horizon. There is a rich background behind the work, or, rather, the mind of each essayist; there is a dominant personality in the work of both men, but the field of knowledge has suffered a great expansion, the autumnal wisdom is more inclusive and spiritual. Carlyle's force seems heightened by the very limitations of the essay, as the current of a river rises into more tumultuous sweep and roar when it leaves the broad channel and rushes through a narrow gorge in the hills. Emerson's penetrating thought, on the other hand,

gains brilliancy as the stars become more splendid when one looks at them from a narrow place inclosed between projecting heights. One must be a master of the art to pack a thought within the confines of a sonnet and yet evoke its complete suggestiveness; and one must command the higher resources of thought and of speech to put a philosophy into an essay; set, like a mountain lake, so high that it has an immeasurable depth not only for the plummet, but for the shining of the stars. In Carlyle's portraiture of Burns, depth, reality, and beauty are intensified by the dimensions of the canvas; other men have studied the poet more exhaustively and painted him with far more fidelity to detail of feature; but no one has made the man so clear to us, or given us an impression so consistent and adequate. Carlyle employs very few effects; he never attempts to say many things in an essay; he gives us one or two reorganizing ideas, — an incident, seen in a sudden and often lurid light; a human face drawn with marvelous skill against a grim background; above all, he gives us the impetuosity, the vivid force, the pictorial genius of his temperament.

Emerson, on the other hand, gives us a succession of thoughts which appear to have no connection, but which are all aspects of one thought; for Emerson always sees the world from one point of view, and the expert reader can quickly uncover the formative conception if he is willing to postpone for a little the enjoyment of the teasing surprise of a swift and shining procession of ideas. These thoughts are rooted in that larger observation which the man of genius is able to make of his position, but they flash concentric rays on a point so distant that many readers do not discern it. Emerson's wisdom is never without a touch of New England shrewdness, but it is only incidentally prudential. Poor Richard would have found rich pickings in him; but Poor Richard would also have found much which would have puzzled and disconcerted him. In Emerson the autumnal wisdom is not only ripe; it is intuitive, individual, prophetic. Nearly all the wisdom-writers have limited their vision to the earthly fortunes and relations of the soul; Emerson deals with its complete development and its universal relations. Montaigne and his fellow craftsmen have found endless

variety and interest in difference; Emerson finds unfathomable meaning and beauty in identity. They break life up into a thousand prismatic fragments; he puts it together in a shining symmetry. In "Works and Days" the essay reveals its full compass as a literary form; within its narrow limits there are thoughts that run to the ends of the earth, and there is beauty such as touches the pen only in the most fortunate hours.

Criticism is so closely related to the essay that it may be regarded as one of its most significant forms. A large part of the most important comment upon and estimate of the great works of literature is to be found in the essay form. Nearly all critics of the first rank have been essayists — in our own language Addison, Johnson, Coleridge, Lamb, De Quincey, Carlyle, Arnold, Lowell, Pater, Hutton, Whipple, Stedman; while Sir Philip Sidney's "Defence of Poesy," and those prefaces of Dryden and Wordsworth which are such important documents in English criticism are not only in the essay form, but reveal all the characteristics of the essay. The chief foreign critics — Sainte Beuve, Scherer, Le Maître, Brunetière, Brandes,

to select a few representatives of a large group of accomplished students of literature — are essayists whose work, apart from its expository or interpretative quality, has great charm and value as literature. It is interesting to note that many of the critics of dominating influence have been men of insight rather than of logical habit of mind. Herder was an immense force in the modern critical movement; Coleridge has perhaps done more than any other writer for English criticism; Amiel and Joubert were of that small group who feed criticism with fresh ideas; Goethe's most important insights into the art of literature found expression largely in works which are only incidentally critical, in aphorisms or maxims, and in conversation. There may seem, at the first glance, something of defect and limitation in this discursiveness and fragmentariness. Those who must find in art the same formal logic, definiteness, and inclusiveness which they find in science can hardly avoid a suspicion of superficiality in a treatment which seems so partial and which is so essentially unscientific in method. There have been and are critics of the scientific habit of mind, who

arrive at principles upon a strictly inferential basis; who treat the phenomena of art as the scientist treats the phenomena of the natural world; and these critics have their place and their value; but an art which draws its life from insight, feeling, passion, the interpretation of facts and experience through personality, the play of temperament, must find its vital exposition through kindred qualities. There is a flood of light thrown upon art when we approach it from the standpoint of psychology, but art is never touched where it lives by such an approach. Criticism is vital, penetrative, luminous, only when it is the product of the creative temper. It takes an artist to catch an artist. The key to the work of art is insight, not observation; hence the discursive quality of the criticism of men like Goethe, Herder, Joubert, Coleridge, Amiel. "Almost all rich veins of original and striking speculation," says John Stuart Mill, "have been opened by systematic half-thinkers." The half-thinker, like Goethe, Coleridge, Carlyle, and Emerson, who sees a whole-world, is often more inclusive and creative than the whole-thinker who sees a half-world.

Criticism not only takes the form of the essay to a very considerable extent, but it involves a kindred ripeness of experience. It is the product of an age which has at least begun to meditate; the touch of the autumnal wisdom is in it. Its beginnings must be sought in the examination and comparison of texts. It began in the endeavor to cleanse and restore the form of great works; it passed thence to a full knowledge of those works and an inevitable comparison of one with another; it came last to a perception of the nature of art, its laws of structure, its significance as a disclosure of the human spirit. It presupposes the existence of a body of literature sufficient in quantity and important enough in quality to stimulate and compel study and comparison; for criticism is not a body of abstract doctrine applied to artistic work, but a body of principles and maxims derived from the study of that work. The possibility of art, the necessity of giving concrete expression to the inner life, exists first in the nature of man; takes form in the works of art, and finally discloses order, method, and interior structure in a body of criticism which is the revelation

by these works of their secrets of structure and form to sensitive minds.

Textual study develops a critical attitude, but it is essentially secondary; it belongs to scholarship rather than to literature. Æsthetic criticism, which deals with the principles and laws of art, with beauty of form, with the significance of art as a spiritual expression, is late in point of time, but is essentially creative work; work, that is, which brings a new set of truths into view in forms which have the touch of beauty and finality. The famous comment of Goethe upon Hamlet, for instance, is likely to live as long as anything in his prose works. It is a critical exposition, but it is also a piece of literature. Carlyle's study of Burns and Emerson's essay on Montaigne have places as chapters in the development of criticism, but they are also enduring works of literary art. "Criticism as it was first instituted by Aristotle," says Dryden, "was meant a standard of judging well; the chiefest part of which is, to observe those excellencies which should delight a reasonable reader." Thus early was struck the true critical note — the note of sympathy and of insight; the note struck again and

again with such resonance by Goethe, who is perhaps the first of all critics of literature. The work of judging, which was in a way the earliest function of criticism, remains one of its most important but not its chief function. The criticism of judgment must not only continue, but must increase in volume in the degree in which culture spreads. In France, where the artistic sense is developed by a more general artistic education than in any other country, and where the sense of form is accordingly more keen and general, the art of criticism is practiced with extraordinary skill by a multitude of writers. And this criticism has great value, not for its direct influence upon the individual writer, but for its educational influence upon readers. A sound criticism is, under existing conditions, a safeguard against inferior or unbalanced work.

But criticism — the judgment of works of art by comparison and by the application of principles disclosed by existing works of art, — could not rest in the promulgation of judgments; it was compelled, by the impulse which it received from its material, to broaden its range and deepen its insight.

The moment the full scope of the creative activity disclosed in literature came into the view of a critical mind of the highest order, a new kind of literature became inevitable. When the literature of many races in many forms could be seen at a glance, the unity and significance of literature in the life of the race took the form of a new conception of literature itself. Study the lyric, the drama, the novel, the essay, in detachment from one another, and certain laws and methods of structure reveal themselves; include all these literary forms in one comprehensive study, and literature in its totality takes on the authority and splendor of a revelation of the soul, living its life and working out its destiny under historic conditions. The place of literature in history becomes clear, and its relations to knowledge and life are seen in true perspective.

"Many minds have contributed to the working out of what may be called the vital, as distinguished from the abstract idea of history and art; but we owe to Herder, Winckelmann, Lessing, and Goethe a lasting obligation for their varied but harmonious exposition of this deep and luminous concep-

tion; perhaps the most fundamental and characteristic idea which modern thought has produced. Winckelmann's contribution to the knowledge of art may be taken as an illustration of the general work of these thinkers. Instead of looking at Greek sculpture as comprising a series of detached and unrelated works, he discerned the unity and harmony of these works as expressions of a single impulse or activity; more than this, he discerned the vital relation of sculpture, as the Greeks practiced it, to their genius, their temper, and their life. He saw that neither individual impulse nor skill accounted for Greek art, but that its explanation must be sought in the Greek nature. He saw that the art of sculpture in Greek hands was of a piece with all the other arts, and that what was characteristic of Phidias, the sculptor, was also characteristic of Sophocles, the poet, of Plato, the thinker, and of Pericles, the statesman. Everything the Athenians did in their best years was of a piece, and all their arts were so many expressions of their nature. Elevation, simplicity, and repose were characteristics common to sculptured figures, acted dramas, philosophic specula-

tion, and practical statesmanship; sculpture, literature, philosophy, and oratory were, therefore, vitally related parts of a complete and harmonious expression of Greek life, and the Greek nature was the soil in which all these beautiful growths had their root. Winckelmann discerned the natural history of art; its response to external conditions; its large dependence on soil, sky, temperament, religion, political character; the impress of race upon it. He saw, in a word, the unity of Greek life and history. He put a vital process in place of an abstract idea, a living organism in place of unrelated products of individual skill.

"Herder, fresh from the study of the Bible, of Shakespeare, and of the English ballads, approached the study of history and literature in the same spirit. He put aside all ideas of artificial production; he saw that literature is a natural growth; that its roots are in the life of man, and that it responds to the changing conditions of that life as swiftly and surely as vegetation responds to a change of soil; each soil nourishing the growth to which it is specially adapted. The significant word with Herder was growth;

because growth implies natural process as opposed to mechanical process, spontaneous impulse as distinguished from conscious action, genius as contrasted with artifice, and the personality of the writer as against abstract ideas. His thought of what goes to the making of a great work of literature is well expressed in the words of Goethe's: 'Everything that a man undertakes to produce, whether by action, word, or in whatsoever way, ought to spring from the union of all his faculties.' In other words, a work of art is an expression of a man's whole nature and life; something that grows out of him and not something which he puts together with mechanical dexterity. Herder discerned the natural history of literature, its vital relation to the life behind it, its close and inevitable connection with human history and development. 'Poetry in those happy days,' he declared, 'lived in the ears of the people, on the lips and in the harps of living bards; it sang of history, of the events of the day, of mysteries, miracles, and signs. It was the flower of a nation's character, language, and country; of its occupations, its prejudices, its passions, its aspirations, and

its soul.' The epic was 'the living history of the people.' This view of life and its arts is now familiar to us, but it was strange and revolutionary to the contemporaries of Herder. It involved a reconstruction of ideas regarding art, and a reorganization of knowledge. The great conception of society as a development, an unfolding under certain fixed conditions and laws, was implicit in it. Goethe, with his poetic sensitiveness to the approach of new ideas, and that amplitude of mind which made him hospitable to new truth, accepted the nature of man as having the authority of a revelation, and refused to reject any part of it. In history, religion, art, and literature he discerned the endeavor of the soul to express itself, its experience, and its hopes; the natural history of man is written in his works; they all issue from his life, and together they form the record and disclosure of his nature." [1]

In this view literature is a product of the entire personality of the writer, and therefore a revelation of the human spirit in its completeness and integrity. This conception is the largest and most important result of

[1] *Short Studies in Literature.*

the critical movement in literature; the most significant product of the study, not of one piece or form of literature nor of the literature of a race, but of all literature. It is the disclosure of this truth and its application, in noble and beautiful forms, which gives criticism its highest authority, and transforms it from a derivative into an original and creative art. It will always study, compare, and judge; but it will also discover, reveal, refresh, and liberate.

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